An Evaluation of Factors Affecting Decision Making Among 4th Grade Elementary School Students with Low Socio-Economic Status

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Abstract

Decision making is one of the most important life skills. While making correct, timely, accurate and appropriate decisions lead to positive changes in one's life, making incorrect decisions may have a negative impact. It is an important issue to examine what the 4th grade students in primary school have about the decision-making ability to be achieved in adolescence and what qualities 4th grade primary students should have for this skill. Evaluation of 4th grade elementary school students for developmental characteristics and qualifications they need to have to be able to gain appropriate decision making ability by puberty emerges as an important issue. Even though age 9-10 is not a period when important or life changing decisions are made, it is still considered the period that individuals start to make real decisions in their life. In this age period, we believe that attempts can be made to help children use their decision making ability more effectively by identifying factors affecting this behavior. In this regard, the aim of this study is to determine factors that have impact on children's decision making process. This study is designed as a case study and conducted according to qualitative research approach. The study was conducted with 34 elementary school students and 3 teachers. Student interview forms developed by researchers were used to collect the data. In accordance with the data obtained, interviews were conducted with the teachers. The content analysis is included during data analysis process. In our study, we have shown that TV-media, family- close family/friends, neighborhood, the teaching process and some developmental characteristics are found to have affected children's decision making.

Keywords: 4th grade elementary school students, Decision-making

Introduction

Individuals are confronted with situations that require constant decision-making from early years of life until they die. Individuals do have to make preferences and choices for the situations arise from a certain need, problem or expectation. Choice making also

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referred as decision-making process may have a decisive role in the course of the individual's life.

The ability to make choices is fundamental in developing life responsibility (Cote Sparks & Cote, 2012). Throughout our lives, we make lots of various choices as minor as what to wear, what to eat, which program to watch on TV to more major choices like planning our future (Cote, Sparks & Cote, 2012). And sometimes people may have to take life changing decisions. Choosing a career, spouse, friend or social environment and place to live are among some of these vital decisions.

Decision making is defined as the assessment of two or more options and the ability to choose between them (Budak, 2000). Preference and choice making are the most important components of decision-making concept in the definitions in literature. According to the Turkish Language Society, the concept of choosing means to take and pick the liked one, to prefer the superior as deemed appropriate, to look up and make choice through an aspect accordingly, and the concept of preferring is expressed as opting for something over other (Turkish Language Society, 2006). As such, making preferences is defined as whether an individual likes a person or an item (Kearney & Mcnight, 1997). Choice making can be expressed as obtaining the preferred one (Harchik et al., 1993). Choice making is also defined as individual's deciding freely on what he/she wants (Cote Sparks & Cote, 2012).

Decision-making is the ability to show behaviors that appeal to the individual's mood and logic and that also ensure individual's social acceptance and attainment of respectable results (Karaçay, 2015). The decision-making process is a cognitive process that entails choosing the appropriate behavior with a tendency (preference) to satisfy a need as soon as it arises and to eliminate accompanying tension (Kuzgun, 1992). Considering the definitions made on the subject, decision-making process, which is defined as the evaluation of the choices or making preferences, also seems to be regarded as a process based on social values. The purpose of the individual in the decision-making process can be expressed as to find the optimal solution in accordance with his/her own purpose, values, goals and needs.

There are many factors that influence the decision-making process. In the decision-making process individuals choose what they want sometimes based on knowledge and sometimes under the influence of the set of values (Kaltsounis, 1987). One of the key factors that constitute individual's system of values is society, and the decision-making process is a complex process in which the individual and society are included (Allison, Jordan & Yeatts, 1992).

However, in this process, it is difficult to say that the individuals always make informed decisions. It is very difficult to determine when and how a decision is made. Sometimes preferring to do nothing and staying unresponsive is sometimes a decision too, and it can be a decided act. Despite everything, the idea that the decisions we made are the facts of our life should be taken into consideration (Barker, 1998). Sometimes, we witness that other people's decisions can influence our life as well as our own decisions. Even it is expressed that the individual values have an impact on the decision-making process, it is better to state that the social values are also effective in this process (Allison, Jordan & Yeats, 1992). The development of decision-making skills in this sense can be considered under the Social Studies Program (Naylor & Diem, 1987). In order to develop these skills, it is required to know what happens in the decision-making process and realize the effective factors of our choices.

The decision-making process is a process in which many factors can be effective. In the decision-making process, it was determined that individuals use different strategies. The

decision-making strategy refers to the process of the individual's determining how to act in a situation that requires making a decision (Ersever, 1996). In this process, what steers individual to the decision-making behavior is the formation of a difficulty causing the need for decision-making, and there are lots of options to handle this difficulty and the individual has the freedom to go for one of these options (Kuzgun, 1992).

But in the individual's life, there are some situations that require making choices among desired ones or those as obligations or moral requirements. For example, assuming that the individual has 2 hours of spare time, he/she can prefer to see the movie that he/she is expecting to see, or give up the joy of seeing the movie and he/she can go to the nursing home to visit his/her bedridden uncle. Some individuals would prefer to visit their bedridden uncle instead of having the joy of seeing the movie. Such choices are interpersonal and social choices. In a sense, it refers to the sense of responsibility in terms of values. This type of behavior and reasoning abilities are emerging from Piaget's concrete operational stage. Piaget connects decision-making abilities to the emergence of the "values conservation tool" of which he calls willpower (Wadsworth, 2015).

The decision-making process is formed because of a need and difficulty emerged, it starts with a conflicting process and that process leads the individual to make a decision (Adair, 2000). During the decision-making process, there should be choices for the formation of the options, understanding these options and the determination of the options (Blunden, 1994). Preferences are used for increasing the quality of life of individuals by making their own decisions, in life planning, and used in the evaluation of the various options against in daily life. (Ülke-Kürkçüoğlu, 2007). The individual, who will make a decision, thinks on an ideal option among all, starts to create options, and by subjecting these options' results to a comprehensive assessment he/she makes the preference (Adair, 2000).

In particular, the period before the decision usually begins with a mental conflict and the individual gets motivated on the need of decision to be made. In this case, by seeking for ideal solutions for the problem the individual turns these to a mental evaluation (Ersever, 1996; Zeleny, 1982). In this evaluation process, the individual's preferences are affected by the meaning attributed to stimulus by him/herself. Stafford (1999) expresses that the simplest situation of decision-making process consists of one preferred and one non-preferred stimulus formations. It is followed by a preferred and a neutral stimulus formation. The time when the individuals have difficulty to choose is the time when there are two preferred stimuli. In this process, the individual realizes his/her preferences by making observations and by obtaining information on the internal decision-making process regarding this information (Develioğlu, 2006). Regarding the evaluation process, there are basically two approaches mentioned. One of these is the normative approach aims to estimate the statistical process, the other one is the descriptive approach which includes the effective factors od the individual's decisions, the source of the decisions and the environmental impacts of the decisions (Lizarraga, 2005; Öncül, 2013).

The decision-making process is not a process that can be detected and predicted by only a single agent. The decision-making process occurs as a result of the effects of many factors nested. The decision-making process consisting of several stages reflects an attitude on the past and future results. Despite the decision-making process referred to as the process of making a rational choice, it is expressed that the process is influenced by a number of factors other than the rational regulation (Can, 1991, Sağır, 2006). One of these factors effective in the emergence of people's decision is the topic of social factors. Besides that, in social life, the decisions may have a number of personal, environmental and economic consequences (Brown, et al., 2011). Considering the social factors, it is expressed that the parents have an impact on individuals' long-term and important decisions while the friends are said to be effective on short-term and less important decisions (Wilks, 1986).

However, it won't be right to tackle the decision-making activity only as the decision-making problem. That process is influenced by the characteristics of individuals, environmental factors and the other people around (Sardoğan, et al., 2006). As the decision-making experiences get developed by age, the decisions can be taken more effectively. It is possible to claim that each decision is shaped in accordance with the age. In this context, the decision-making is regarded as a developmental phenomenon. Considering the various processes from birth to death and with the effect of the social life, the individuals take important or unimportant decisions. Because every decision taken requires the solution of a sociological problem, the process must be evaluated in a developmental dimension (Öncül, 2013).

There are some effects of external and internal factors in the realization of children's preference behavior in terms of developmental aspect. External sources are expressed as the children's being aware of their environment, spatial attention, object attention, and the internal source is expressed as attention. The attention process is emphasized to develop with the first years of the life. The Organism detects stimuli and selects some of them, and concentrates on them (Van Tubbergen, et al., 2008).

In infancy and early childhood, a fast sensory, motor and cognitive development occurs. In this process, from infancy, children are said to have had the opportunity to choose as they are faced with many problems. As a result of this situation, the ability to choose begins to develop for children. When children begin to make choices, the decision-making process also begins for them. However, the decisions are impulsive and intuitive. The choices made by preferences make little children develop daily activities and routines. Both of these opportunities make up the beginning of independence and self-determination decision making which are substantial abilities in social competence development (McCormick, et al., 2003).

As the age increases, the decision-making skill is thought to develop positively. The impulsive and intuitive decision-making styles which are used in the beginning begin to leave their places   to logical decision-making skills (Gazda, 1989). 4th grade of primary school and 5th grade of secondary school corresponds to a development period referred as concrete operational stage by Piaget. The concrete operations development period is a transition period between the abstract thought and thought before the operation (Wadsworth, 2015). Children of 10-11 age in this transition period are in the last period of their childhood and in early phases of puberty. Therefore, it is stated that children at this age show more stable and balanced situation than lower or upper age range (Bacanlı, 2011). In the concrete operational stage, the child begins to make full use of logical operations for the first time. The thought is no longer dominated by the perceptions. During this period, the child begins to understand others' perspectives Development of willpower, causing norms and values obligations, ensures arrangement of affective reasoning. Reasoning and self-determination in affectivity continue to grow in social relations, revealing mutual respect (Wadsworth, 2015).

One of the important characteristics of the concrete operational stage is the emergence of the self-determination feelings. The concept of self-determination can be expressed as to perform the actions which are decided freely by the child's willpower. Self-determination reasoning is the people's reasoning according to the rules they have created. Rather than accepting the old values created by others, the child prefers to reconsider them. Self-determination reasoning is to consider others as well as oneself. Self-determination is self-regulatory (Wadsworth, 2015). While Deci and Ryan (1985), define autonomy as "capacity of choice and determiners of the individual's actions"; Schoss, Alper and Jayne (1993), describe it as "an individual's ability to decide on choices and making an appropriate choice with his daily life and routine". Autonomy is a person's decision-

making on behalf of himself/herself rather than feeling that his/her actions are controlled or that s/he is forced to fulfill those actions. According to the theory, autonomous individuals act in accordance with their specific interests, values, and requests (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Autonomy, in the theory of self-determination, is evaluated as the self-management of an individual. In other words, it refers to an individual's making his/her own decisions without any external pressure (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination is individuals' taking responsibility for their own lives; and experiencing the feeling of selection in initiating and organizing their behaviors (Connell & Ryan, 1989). It is fact that the choices made by individuals are based on their desires, interests, values; and that they behave without the influence of external factors (Calp, 2013). Self-determination means desiring, selecting an action completely, and requesting a personal approval (Schiefel, 2001). In his theory; Piaget discusses autonomy, thought to be effective in selecting behavior, in two dimensions as mental and affective.

Mental autonomy is about an individual's making choices on behalf of himself, and knowing how to decide. This is just like a detective going after what's important while searching for the truth, testing hypotheses and deciding what to do next based on what is currently known. Affective autonomy, on the other hand, arises from the relationship of mutual respect. This relationship is first established with peers and then with adults. Affective autonomy, therefore, takes its source from children's social activities and is based on freely chosen cooperation.

The concept of autonomy, which Piaget mentioned as a concrete operational period feature in his theory, is an individual and social concept. This concept is an individual initiative that emphasizes cooperation with others, the relationship of mutual respect and shared values (Wadsworth, 2015). Empirical research shows that autonomy not only affects the academic performance of children but also adults' job satisfaction and professional job performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Flaste, 1996; Garcia & Pintrich, 1996; Lowe, 2009; Pink, 2010).

As a result, decision-making is one of the most important life skills. While onsite, timely, accurately and appropriately made decisions will cause positive changes in the life of the individual, wrong decisions will affect the lives of individuals in a negative way (Tatlılıoğlu, 2014). Individuals who want to succeed are obliged to be aware of alternatives and select the most appropriate one(s) that will lead to better outcomes. Considering that this behavior of selection is also important in determining the social roles, it can be said that there is a link between the ability to decide and personal accomplishment (Byrnes, 2002).

"Experiencing this feeling of selection" is dependent on the autonomy-supporting feature of the environment in which the child lives (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The people that children face vary depending on the environment they are in. However, what is important is the degree of autonomy support that the environment the children live provides. Accordingly, when children receive the support of autonomy from their environment, their levels of self-determination increase because when children make their decisions willingly and voluntarily, when they are not controlled, or when they do not feel pressure and coercion, self-determination is realized. A behavior realized as autonomous has a more positive effect on continuity, permanency and well-being than external and controlled behavior (Calp, 2013).

Considered developmentally, while the decisions particularly in the pre-operation period are not taken consciously, children come to make conscious and reasonable judgments by entering the concrete operations period. In this sense, the fact that elementary school

students in the 4th grade developmentally start making judgments is also an indication that they begin making decisions by evaluating and questioning. Conscious realization of such a behavior for the first time in the life is another point to be considered. Such that, the children in this period start to make informed choices considering the mechanisms they use when they take decisions.

In this sense, examination of what developmental characteristics primary school 4th graders have in terms of decision-making skills in adolescence, which is the final stage of middle childhood period, emerges as an important issue. In line with theoretical explanations made, the decision-making skills of 4th-grade students is an issue that should be addressed as a sociological necessity within the scope of Social Studies Curriculum. It is noted that this skill, which seems to be associated with other thinking skills, in particular with the critical thinking skill, is in the developmental stage in 4th-grade students (Öncül, 2013).

The age period between 9 and10, though not a period in which decisions that will affect the overall life are not taken, is regarded as an age when decisions are taken in real terms. It is thought that it will be possible to make arrangements for children to use their decision-making skills more effectively through determining the factors that are effective in shaping their decisions; therefore, this study is significant in this sense. The purpose of this research is to determine the factors that impact children's decision-making processes.

Method

Research Paradigm

This study adopted qualitative research method, which is sensitive to the social context of research and is based on understanding the depth of context with flexible data collection techniques (Mason, 2002). The research was designed with case study research model, which is one of the qualitative research models. Decision-making behavior is the "case" of this work and it is discussed in detail in the introduction. Case study is a strategy aiming to understand a case and exploring the incidences in their environments (Bloor & Wood 2006). As the factors affecting the decision-making behaviors of the students in 4th grade are examined, it can be said that the study was followed a real-life (internal) case study paradigm. Real-life (internal) case studies are applied when researchers want to understand a definite event clearly. It is the researcher's trying to describe a definite characteristic to understand the case in general (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Within the scope of the study, some research questions under three main categories were directed to the students and these questions were considered as "means serving a purpose". The students, who are in the concrete operational stage according to the cognitive classification by Piaget, were not asked an abstract question like "What sorts of factors affect your decisions?" instead some questions related their ideal profession, the city they want to live and the person/people who they want to live with were asked. Considering these sample questions and their responds, the researchers tried to determine the factors affecting their decisions.

Study Group

The study was carried out in a school in one of the neighborhoods having a low socio-economic level in Altındağ district of Ankara, and a total of 34 primary school 4th-grade students, 22 males and 12 females, and their teachers were included in the study. The school is located in an area where people from the same province often immigrated to the capital, Ankara. Some of the students are related to each other. In this regard, students related to each other were also given place to in the study group. The socio-economic levels of the students in the school were largely similar. When the students' family income

levels are examined, it is seen that more than half (62%) have an income level of 1500 TL or less. Besides, only 9% of the students can say that the income level is between 2500TL-3500TL. When educational levels of their parents are examined, it is seen that 41% of the mothers of the students are high school graduates and the others are secondary school graduates, primary school graduates or not educated. From the point of view of the father's educational status, only one of the students father had a bachelor's degree and 53% of others were high school graduates and the others were secondary school graduates, primary school graduates or not educated. In addition, most of the children (74%) do not have their own room and it is seen that 67% of the children have 2 or 3 siblings.

We also aimed to include students with different levels of academic achievements in the study group, and to this end, the teachers were asked to classify their students in accordance with their levels of achievement through the interviews conducted with them. Additionally, three teachers from 4-A, 4-B and the 4-C classes, all of whom were female, were also included in the study. While the form teachers of 4-A and 4-C branches had 10 or more working years, the form teacher of 4-B had 8 years of working experience. Besides, only the form teacher of 4-B was a graduate of the Department of Elementary Education, Faculty of Education. Other teachers were not graduates of the Faculty of Education. All of the three teachers had been teaching continuously in the same class for 4 years. The students in the study group had also been in the class of the same teacher since the first grade.

Data Collection Process

In order to determine the factors that influence the decisions of students in the study, three general categories regarding personal life were selected: professional profile, the place they want to live and the people they want to be with. The data were collected through a 12-point semi-structured interview form consisting of questions to understand the students' preferences in these three categories and the reasons for their preferences.

The form is composed of three parts. In the first part are questions to determine which job the children will choose, why they want to do it, and the factors affecting their preference. In the second part are questions to determine where the children want to live in the future, why they want this and the factors affecting their preference; in the third part, with whom the children want to live in the future, why they want them, and the factors affecting this preference of them.

The interview form that was developed to determine students' views was also used as a teacher interview form. Since the teachers had been teaching the students for four years uninterruptedly, they also had information about the families of the students, the environment the live in, and various characteristics of students beyond their life at school. At this point, the teachers were asked to state their views with regard to the factors affecting these decisions based on the answers of the students to these questions. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from teachers.

Validity and Reliability

Maxwell (1992) stated that researchers should report everything that they saw and heard about the incident investigated and also expressed that data obtained and statistically supported was defined as "descriptive validity".

According to Maxwell (1992) descriptive validity, refers to the accuracy of the data. The data must accurately reflect what the participant has said or done. The reporting of the data must also reflect the same accuracy, which means that the transcription is an accurate account of what was said or the transcription of the videotapes portrays the

unfolding of events in an accurate manner. In this study, researchers have chosen to express the data obtained at each step of interview process in categories. The categories derived from interviews with students were re-evaluated by teachers and research findings were organized in line with the statements of the teachers. Data variables with the highest frequency was taken into consideration in the interpretation process.

Another type of validity that is suggested by Maxwell is generalizability. Although there is debated whether the generalizability is suitable for qualitative research studies, it is stated that it is important to select a suitable sample with similar characteristics in line with the research questions and case to be examined. In qualitative research what is important is that sample's suitability to the case to be examined rather than its ability to represent the universe of research sample (Maxwell, 1992). In this regard findings of research were evaluated based on students' statements and teachers' assessments. To this end teachers were asked to evaluate the children by considering their living environment, child's individual and psychological characteristics, parents' togetherness, economic level, friendship relations, family ties, interest and so on. Therefore, the students who were with the same teacher for 4 years uninterruptedly and their teachers were included in the study. Furthermore, the average grade of the students and socio-economic status were taken into consideration in this context. The school is located in a district inhabited by families with similar cultural characteristics and socioeconomic status.

Besides, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) examine internal validity as to whether events the researchers thought that they observed or phenomena that the researchers thought that they understood reflect the real situations. Daymon and Holloway (2003), however, state that it can be achieved through sharing findings with participants. For this purpose, researchers have reached a new assessment through the data obtained from students by sharing these with teachers and getting their opinions on these matters. Thus, surveyed teachers were made aware of the results obtained and they contributed to the results. In the research process, reviews obtained at the last stage of the study have been associated with self-determination theory. The theory mentioned in the introduction are discussed in regards to the obtained data in the discussion and results sections.

Analysis of the Data

The content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the research process. The content analysis includes interpretation processes by bringing together similar data in the framework of certain concepts and themes, and editing these data in a way that readers can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). In this way, the aim is to remove the subjective factors in understanding and interpreting a statement (Bilgin, 2006). The data obtained from the interview process are encoded with the content analysis process. In order to ensure the reliability of coding, the codes developed by the researchers were examined by three different experts in the field, and they were asked to give scores to the codes. It was thought that a code having 0 point had to be re-coded, and one with 1 point was acceptable. The code statement getting "0" point from two experts were re-arranged, and the codes having "0" point from one expert and "1" point from the other were either re-stated or left unchanged. Codes were edited based on the related feedbacks.

Findings

Within the scope of the study, the researchers aimed to ascertain what the future plans of primary school 4th-grade students and the factors effective in their future plans are. Following from the answers given by the students, interviews were conducted with teachers and they were asked to interpret the factors effective in making this preference especially based on the individual characteristics of the students. Thus, the researchers sought to determine the factors that impact the future planning of the students.

Table 1 shows the profession the students want to do in the future, the reasons for choosing this job, and the factors that are effective in their preferences based on the students' opinions.

Table 1. *Career Choices of Primary School 4th Grade Students and the Factors Thought to be Effective*

The job he/she wants to do in the future	The reasons for choosing	The factors thought to be effective
Doctor	*To treat disease* A job I like To save lives	My Family Experience TV – TV series Nobody- myself
Footballer	I play football well	Nobody- myself
Astronaut	I'm curious about the aliens	Nobody- myself
Aquarist	I like fish very much	Nobody- myself
Architect	To attract tourists to our country To build houses on empty lands	TV- Documentaries Buildings around me
Judge	To save innocent people To bring justice to my country	My Family Nobody- myself
Pilot	I love flying	Experience
Police officer	To catch the thieves Due to the unrest in the World A job I like A sacred job To save my nation To help people To save the innocent people	TV – TV series My Family Police Officers Nobody- myself
Nurse	To cure people	Environment – Neighbors My Family
Teacher	Teaching is good To give knowledge I love children	Teachers My own teacher My Family

Examining the career preferences of students, it is seen that they extensively want to be police officers. Of the reasons for choosing this profession, the idea to catch thieves was the most frequently cited one. However, there were also students who stated that they chose this profession because there was unrest in the world, they want to help people, because they want to save their nation, and because it is a sacred and popular job. Students said that TV series were especially effective in choosing this profession. Besides, there were also the students expressing that his family and police officers were effective in their choice. One of the students, giving the name of a character of a police officer in a TV series, stated that he wanted to be like him. The person in the TV series played the character of a law enforcement officer fighting against terrorism. The student stated the reason for his wish to be like the film character and "to save the innocent people in the mountains". In this regard, TV and TV serials were found to be effective in students' preference for choosing police officer.

However, the profession doctor was also extensively expressed as one of the professions that students want to do. The students stated that they preferred to be a doctor to save lives and to save people from diseases. Apart from these, there were also students who wanted to be a pilot as they loved flying; students who wanted to be a nurse to treat people; students who wanted to be teachers as they loved children and teaching; students

who wanted to be footballers as they think they are talented; students who wanted to be astronauts as they were curious about aliens; students who wanted to be aquarists as they loved to fish, students who wanted to be architects to build houses on empty lands, and students who wanted to be judges to save the innocent and bring justice.

According to the findings of the study, the students were focused on television. They expressed that a number of television programs, particularly documentaries and TV series, were effective in their career choices. However, they also pointed out that they were affected by their families, their lives, their surroundings and teachers in their career choice.

In talks with classroom teachers on the subject, teachers signified that the events taking place in the environments they lived might be effective in their preference to be a police officer. They stated that thieves breaking into the houses of their neighbors, the people arrested by the police in their surroundings, some cars in which people drink alcohol and drug operations were the reasons for students to prefer the policing profession. According to the teachers, the most important reasons why students gave these responses were firstly the adverse event in their neighborhood and then TV series and taking people doing this profession as role models.

Additionally, it can also be expressed that the characteristics of the students are effective in their career preferences. For example, students who preferred nursing were described by their teachers as children who were helpful, harmonious, having good relationships with friends. Their personality characteristics were reported to be effective on their preferences.

Besides, the character of the students has been seen to be effective on preferences. For example, students who were referred by teachers as rather curious chose to be an astronaut. His teacher said that the student continuously asked questions in a course about the subject, and was curious about aliens. The fact that he said "I'll answer it." when the teacher said "this is something yet to be answered" and he chose to do this job also supports this finding.

Based on the findings, teachers were also considered to be effective in students' professional choices. For example, the teacher stated the following for the students who said that they would prefer teaching as a profession. "A, is a slow leaner. He has family problems. His mother has cancer. I'm helping them a lot. I'm with them all the time. So, A, is depending on me. That's why he always says he wants to be a teacher like me".

The events that the students have experienced are thought to have an impact on their choice of profession. Particularly the children thinking that they are aggrieved, treated unfairly, and who face a situation leading to unpleasant consequences for them seem to choose a professional to eliminate such unpleasantness. For example, the student who stated that he wanted to be an architect, said that he preferred this "to make houses on empty lands". His form teacher said that the process of urban renewal was in progress in the area and the slums were demolished. The teacher stated that, "Lots of houses were destroyed within the scope of urban transformation, and he can't make of this, he continually asks "why are they destroying our houses, while there are empty lands?". That's why he preferred to be an architect empathizing with the people whose houses were destroyed and who live in the streets." The teacher's opinion clarifies the factor that influenced student's career choice.

It can be said that abilities are effective in the students' preferences. For example, another student who wanted to be an architect stated that he drew good pictures. Likewise, his

teacher stated that he made pictures of streets and buildings and that he loved painting a lot.

But, this is not the case for the student who chose to become a footballer due to his skills. Indeed, his teachers said for the student who preferred to be a football player that he was not actually talented at football, he was overweight, and added that he was mocked by his friends from time to time. Hence, it can be said that the qualifications that they lack affect the choices of students.

Another point is the impact of students' family lives on their preferences. The student who wanted to be a judge stated that he made this preference to bring justice to his family and people. The teacher of the student remarked that the student's parents were divorced and the problems experienced in the family might have caused the student to make such a choice.

Finally, it is stated that the close environment may also have an influence on preferences. It was stated by his teacher that the student who wanted to be an "aquarist" had no aquariums or fish at home. However, the teacher said that the closest friend of the student had a large aquarium at home and that he constantly talked about it. So, in this regard, it can be uttered that the close environment is effective in the preferences of the students.

The questions in the second category are intended to determine the future plans of the students and the factors effective in these plans, where they want to live in the future, the reasons for this and by whom or by what factors this preference is affected. The obtained results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *The places where 4ᵗʰ-grade students want to live in the future, the causes and effective factors*

The Place he/she wants to live in the future	The reasons for choosing	The factors thought to be effective
İstanbul	*I love the sea* Convenient for living I want to visit the historical places. There are fewer thieves there I saw it on TV.	Nobody –myself TV – TV Series My family My teacher
İzmir	It's beautiful It's by the sea.	Nobody –myself
Ankara	I was born there. My family lives here.	Nobody –myself My family
Antalya	It's by the sea	Nobody –myself
Hakkari	More police are needed there	My family
Rize	A peaceful place that diseases can easily overcome	TV – TV Series
Bolu	It's my hometown.	Nobody –myself
Adana	I love it.	My family
Almanya	More Turks live there.	My family
Avrupa	It's secure.	Nobody –myself
Village	I miss my grandparents.	My family
Afyon	My aunt lives there	Nobody –myself

Table 2. *Cont.*

Çorum	I miss my relatives there	My family
Black Sea Region	I love their way of speaking	TV – TV Series

Examining Table 2, it is seen that students mainly wanted to live in Istanbul. For the students who wished to live in Istanbul, the main reason for living there was "their love for the sea". Additionally, they stated that they preferred to live in this city as it is convenient for living together, they can visit historical places, there are fewer thieves and as they watch the city on TV. The students noted that the television series, their families and teachers were effective in making these preferences. In the ranking of the provinces where the students wanted to live Izmir, Antalya and Ankara are in the second group. Being a city by the sea, like Istanbul, was effective in the decisions of students who preferred Izmir and Antalya. On the other hand, for those who preferred Ankara, the factors that it is their birthplace and the place where their parents lived were among the factors of preference.

In addition to these, there were also students that wanted to live in Afyon, Corum, the Black Sea Region, Antalya, Hakkari, Rize, Bolu, Adana, Germany, Europe and their own villages. Examining the factors affecting the choice of students, it is observed that the students generally preferred these places since their families/relatives lived here and these cities were their hometowns. A student who wanted to live in Germany stated that there were many Turks living there. This student is thought to have made this choice due to the influence of his relatives living abroad. Apart from these, one of the students stated that he preferred to live in the Black Sea region as he loved their way of speaking. Another student who wanted to live in Rize expressed that it was a peaceful place and he could easily overcome diseases. Another student who wanted to live in Hakkari stated that it needed more police officers. One student stated that he preferred to live in Europe as it was more secure to live there.

Evaluating the factors that may impact the choices of students and in the light of the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers, the following points can be stated: first, teachers emphasize that students lived in a limited environment, did not go beyond the immediate vicinity of their neighborhood, and they did not see most of the places in the city they lived in. They stated that for them Ankara is merely the neighborhood they lived in, and that even though they lived in Ankara, they were unaware of Ankara. Thus, the metropolitan know is the one they see on TV is Istanbul. That's why they consistently expressed that they wanted to live in Istanbul. From these findings that are consistent with the statements of the students, TV is said to be effective in student preferences. The fact that the students constantly talked about the sea is also attributed to the effect of TV. Teachers remarked that many of the children probably "did not even see a swimming pool"; however, the students said that they would like to go to the seaside. Therefore, it can be said that the things the students want to reach are effective in their preferences in this sense. Besides, the education received by the students seems to have an impact on their preferences, as well. The student, who had never been to Rize but wanted to live there, stated that it was a peaceful place and that he could easily overcome diseases. As a result of the interview with the classroom teacher, reading text "Curious Turtle Explorer in Rize", which was studied within the term, seems to have an impact on these statements of this student.

Once again, teachers were found to be effective in the student preferences. Indeed, a student who wanted to live in Europe said that it was safe and the traffic was very orderly there. Even though the students stated that he was affected by no one in developing this idea, his teacher expresses that he talked about the traffic system in some of the countries

he had visited before with the photos and videos he took there in the traffic lesson, and the student might have been affected by them.

Finally, to determine the students' future plans and the factors impacting their decisions, the students were asked to specify the people they wanted to live with in the future and what the reason for their preference was. The findings are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *The people 4th-grade students want to live together in the future and their reasons*

The person he/she wants to live with in the future	The factors thought to be effective
With my family	They care of me
	I love them very much.
	It's fun.
	I trust them.
With my dog	It is fun
With my friends	They will support me.
	We have a lot of memories together.
	They can understand me.
With my elder sister	I'm happy with her.
With my relatives	Because the police needed there more.
I don't want anybody with me.	On my own
I love him.	With my elder brother

As can be seen from Table 3, the students predominantly want and plan to live with their parents in the future. This finding could be attributed to the developmental characteristics of students and the influence of Turkish culture. There are also students who want their friends to be near them in the future. In addition to this, there are also students who want to live with their elder sisters, elder brothers, relatives, and dogs or alone. When considered with its reasons, elements like need, love and trust are remarkable among the reasons for living with the family, while elements such as sharing and solidarity are at the forefront concerning preferences to live with friends. While there are students who plan to live with the people they are happy with, there are ones that do not want anybody by them. According to the data obtained from interviews with teachers, it is seen that the students in whose families there are not any problems generally want to live with their families. For example, it was observed that the parents of a student who said that he wanted to live with his elder sister were divorced. Again, another student having 4 siblings stated that he preferred to live with his parents and friends. In this sense, families and family life have been shown to have quite a strong impact on students' choices.

With regard to a student who expressed that he wanted to live alone and did not want anybody to be with him, his teacher said that the student's mother was quite young when she gave birth to her first child, and that she was unaware that she had a child then and now she understood what a child meant to this child. The teacher added that the mother of the child exhibited an overprotective attitude. Therefore, moving from this finding, we can conclude that parental attitudes are also effective on the preferences of students. Again, it was emphasized by the teachers that the students were in early adolescence period. Developmental changes can be said to influence these choices and decisions.

Results, Discussion and Recommendations

If we reach a general conclusion based on the findings, TV-media, Family-Immediate Environment, the Environment Lived in, Schools and Teaching Process, Personal Development Properties are seen to be effective in children's preferences. At this point, the presence of TV-Media among the fundamental elements of the child's life such as school the factors of family, school and personal properties, is thought to be a remarkable result. Following from the results expressed, the effective factors on children's choices are expressed in Figure 4 with their subheadings.
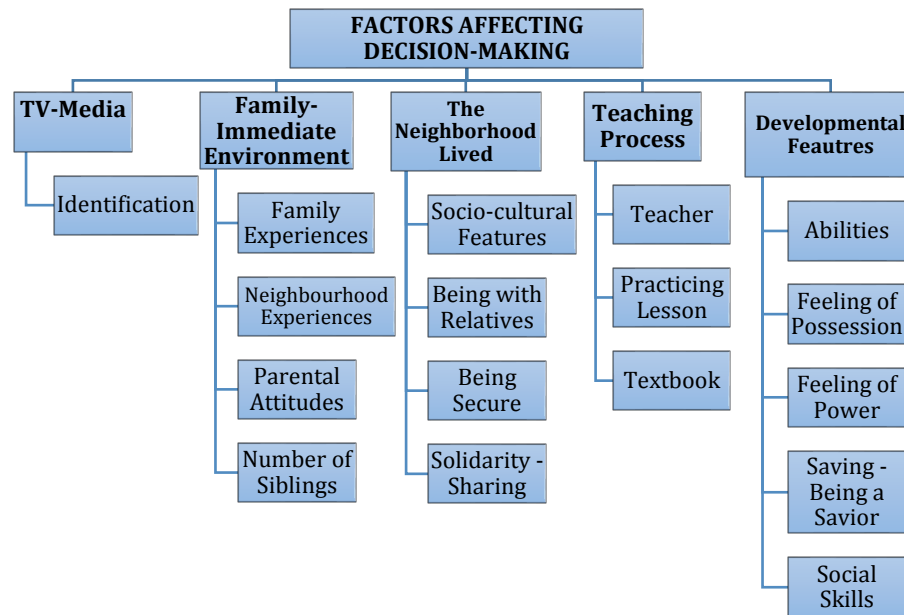
Figure 1. *Factors influencing the choices of Primary School 4th-grade students*

Examining Figure 1, it is concluded that TV-media had an impact on the preferences of children by establishing identification, and family-immediate environment influenced their preferences related to family and neighborhood life, parental attitudes and the number of siblings. The living environment is effective on the choice of individuals' solidarity, sharing, security, being together and in socio-cultural behaviors. While teacher himself, his class and textbooks create an influence on students in the aspect of the teaching process, students skills in terms of development characteristics, sense of power and possession, the idea of being a rescuer and social skills are effective on their choices of behavior.

In the light of the findings obtained in the study, it has been seen that TV shows, especially TV series, are highly effective on children's choices. It is observed that children make their choices by associating the events occurring in the neighborhood and families they live with TV shows. In this sense, it can be expressed that children make their preferences by establishing identification with TV programs. Smith (1994, cited by Kırel, 2010) mentions three stages in the process of establishing identification developing between the viewer and the characters. Viewers give meaning to the characters (recognition process), they gain information about the character with the help of audio-visual elements. Finally, they evaluated the characters within the framework of their own values and, more or less sympathetic-antipathetic connections are formed between them. In the following 4th stage of the mentioned process, it can be considered that an intellectual process which will have an impact on choices will start, because, identification is an intellectual process as well as

being an emotional process. Identification is claimed to be utilitarian take-on process where the viewer selects emotional, intellectual and social components emerging as a result of all the narrative arrangements and uses that will fill in his gaps (Kırel, 2010). In this sense, another remarkable points is the fact that the impact of media and TV series is intensely realized in terms of vocational preferences. From the results obtained from this study, although we can reach to the conclusion that media and TV series are heavily effective in children in terms of vocational preferences, Soloman (1961, cited by Wilks, et al., 1991) has determined that the most powerful force on individuals in making professional decisions is parents.

Another factors that has an effect on children's choices is family. It is concluded that family does not only have an influence as a cause of preference, but also the experiences with the family have an impact on children's choices. One remarkable result obtained from the research is the fact that no evidence has been found related to the impact of the family's provision of role model. In terms of the choices of the child, it is seen that the family is a factor affecting the choices as a result of their presence (trust, love) or the experiences that they provide the child (domestic violence, divorce, etc.). The fact that the mother or father does not clearly have a directive impact on the preferences of the child is believed to be an interesting situation. It was stated in a study conducted by Deveci (2011) that the support provided by the family to the individual had positive results on the decision-making process of an individual, and that the positive support received from the family influenced an individual's decision-making style. There are also studies that reveal the influence of families on female students' hobbies and vocational choices (Brittain, 1963).

Another result obtained from the research on the influence of mothers and fathers on preferences of children is that fathers and mothers' parenting style had an influence on the preferences of children. It was reported in a study by Bednar and Fisher (2003) that while parents were influential factors in moral and information-oriented decisions of adolescents perceiving their parents as authoritarian, their friends were more influential in information-based decisions of the adolescents perceiving their parents as tolerant. In a study by Eldeklioğlu on the relationship between parents' attitudes and decision strategies, it is stated that the children of the families with a democratic attitude adopt reasonable and independent decision-making processes, while the children of overprotective parents are more undecided and intrinsic.

Another point that affects the choices of students in terms of family is the impact of the family life on choices. The first factors having an impact on children's choices is the number of siblings. According to the finding of the study, it seems that the number of siblings, and the sibling rank was one of the factors influencing the choice of the child.

The influence of the neighborhood, as well as the family, on the preferences of the students is one of the results obtained from the research.

However, the immediate-environment that is effective on students' choices exerts its effect through the events experienced by the students. Indeed, from the statements of the students, the immediate environments like the neighborhoods, streets and so on can be said to be effective on the child's preferences. On the other hand, at this point, this result is thought to be due to the neighborhood that the school is located. It is because the location of the school is in an area that neighborly relations are intensely present. Therefore, an event occurring in a street or in a family is seen to be more likely to influence the children.

The fact that the environment children live in is effective in the preferences of the students is also among the research results. It is concluded that children take some of their decisions as a result of the socio-cultural characteristics they live in. The groups of family, teachers and friends especially making up the social environment of elementary school

students are stated to be effective in the decisions and choices the children make (Bednar & Fisher, 2003). In their study on the factors influencing the decision-making process of individuals, Young and Ferguson (1979) discussed the groups that are effective in adolescents' decisions on moral and social issues in three categories. These are: parents, adults outside the family and friends.

At this point, another finding of the study is that immediate family members who live in the same place have impact on the children's preferences. In this sense, a circle, which we can call as "those like him", is seen to be effective on the preferences of children. This point has an effect on children's choices not only as a reason for preference (in the sense of continuing to live those like him) but also as element having impact on their selections (in the sense of directing their selections). In another related dimension, it was seen that the need for "being secure" is effective in the preferences of children. Feelings such as "solidarity, sharing" and "love, need" especially in the environmental and familial context have been shown to direct children's choices.

It was found in a study carried out by Young and Ferguson (1979) that friends were a source of reference on decisions' regarding social acceptance and friend selection, and adults outside family are influential on knowledge related decisions, and parents are influential on decisions related with moral issues. Messick and Brewer (1983) suggest that this situation, which can be expressed as "Social addiction", has an effect on the choices of individuals. Individuals cannot act on their own while choosing whom to marry, or deciding which company to make a deal with in interactive environmental conditions. Environmental factors are very important at this stage. Sometimes situations in which individuals make decisions depending on their level of social skills may arise (Sanfey, 2007).

Hence, the feeling of being a member of a group is an important psychological need. Every human being is in need of social interaction, and this need is seen as an indispensable requirement for a person's biological, psychological and mental health. It is important that an individual feels s/he is in communication with his/her family, friends or any other community. This sense of belonging or desire to build relationships is called the need for "being connected" within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Being connected refers to the need of the individual for satisfactory and supportive social relationships (Deci, Ryan & Williams, 1996). Being connected is a need for individuals to establish connections with others and to experience the sense of belonging to the social environment they live in. This requires mutual respect, conscientious behavior and a feeling of trust in others. Being connected refers to a condition where close relations with others are important and where individual considers people around him (family members, relatives, and friends) as part of his personality (Markus & Kitiyama, 1991), and this is seen to be important in the decision-making process of individuals.

Individual's past and current learning experiences are expressed as a process that influences his/her education, career choice and development (Deveci, 2011). It can be concluded from the results obtained from this research that teachers are effective on the preferences of children. For example, some teachers aim for a thought, a feeling and an attitude with a controlling attitude for their students, and give extrinsic incentives to the students while some motivate their students by supporting the students' individual interests. This is an approach which supports autonomy (Reeve, et al., 1999). It is thought that the attitude of the teachers in this regard is effective in decision-making behavior of children. However, in the context of the results obtained from the research, it can be stated that the choices are shaped through a close and sensible relation of the teacher with the student. After this process, it is obvious that students make a choice as to whether to take the teacher as a role model or not. Besides, apart from the close and sensible approach

towards the student, it is concluded that the teaching process carried out by the teacher is effective on the choices of students, but students are not aware of this effect. That is, when asked the reasons for their choices resulting from the presentation of the teacher, the students are seen to explain this with different reasons. One striking point among these is the fact that textbooks are clearly determined to be effective on the preferences of students.

Another factor having an impact on children is their abilities. As reported by Bandura (1996), the decisions taken by individuals especially regarding their careers is a result of the perceptions of their own abilities. According to this perspective, individuals are aware of their own competence and take them into account in their decision-making process. Feeling of self-efficacy, having influence on others or achieving some important attainments for the individual bring along a sense of self-efficacy. A person must believe in his own abilities to focus on a goal and to feel that he has the power and efficacy to accomplish this goal. This idea as to whether one can be successful in his/her act has been referred to as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1996). Therefore, completing a task successfully requires not only individual's having the ability, but also believing in his/her own ability. This basic need is closely related to person's internal satisfaction (Krapp, 2005). In this context, according to results obtained from research, it can be interpreted that children's perception of their self-efficacy has an effect on their choices. While we conclude that the abilities students considered themselves adequate have an impact on children's choices, it is also seen that the abilities considered inadequate have also an impact on their choices.

One remarkable point here is the fact that children make a decision on issues that they consider themselves inadequate by "pretending". The points that children consider themselves inadequate not only affect them in terms of ability but also affect their preferences in general. Therefore, it can be stated that having low self-efficacy will not always create an adverse situation on the choices. On the contrary, children are thought to believe that they are adequate in that field in order to fill this gap.

When talking about the decision-making process, individual differences can be said to play an important role (Öncül, 2013). It can be expressed that in addition to "the issues" that they consider themselves inadequate, or things that they do not possess, development of the perception that can be called as "weakness" guides their preferences. For instance, when faced with injustice or unfairness, it is seen that children make decisions in a direction to fill this gap, to meet their needs. In connection with this, the idea of "saving-being a savior" is also found to be effective.

It was found in the research that developmental characteristics of children have an impact on their preferences. Following from the research findings, it is seen that some children exhibit characteristics of puberty and this influences their decisions. It was also concluded that the socializing behaviors of children in line with their development process are effective in their decisions. Indeed, based on the findings of the study it can be concluded that students' social and communication skills have an impact on their preferences. Additionally, it is thought that media and TV, which have the power to create an influence on the preferences of children, need to be constantly evaluated in terms of their effect on changing life circumstances and their periodical effects. In this context, it is possible to organize informative meetings with school administrations, teachers, and especially parents through the councils established by the Ministry of National Education against possible harmful effects of media and especially television. Also teaching media literacy skills to children is considered to be important. It is considered that the decision-making and preference-making behaviors of children can be improved through collaborative project tasks appropriate to their developmental characteristics. Due to the significant impact of families and their immediate environments on children's decisions, teaching

children critical thinking skills, metacognitive thinking skills and how to control their own decision-making processes is considered to be important. Based on the findings that teachers, teaching process and textbooks are influential on decision-making behaviors of children, teachers are recommended to give place to instructional processes and materials that take students' decision-making behaviors into account.

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