

Investigation of Career Decision Regrets Among Students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences: A Case Study of Bartın University

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Abstract

Education at the university level shapes one's professional career. A career in sports is more complex than in other professional fields. At times, individuals may experience career regret when faced with challenging situations, which can lead to negative emotions such as depression and loss of self-confidence. Therefore, this paper focuses on investigating the career decision regrets of students in the Faculty of Sports Sciences. The most common technique in descriptive research models, the survey method, was employed in the study. The study group consisted of 400 students from four different departments at Bartın University's Faculty of Sport Sciences. The researchers developed a personal information form, and the 'Career Decision Regret Scale' was utilized. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA tests were applied to analyze the data. The results indicated that students in the Department of Sports Sciences at Bartın University experienced career decision regrets (mean = 38.05). The scale scores differed significantly based on students' age, department, year of study, place of birth, academic average, place of residence, part-time work, father's employment status, and educational level.

Keywords: Job, Decision, Remorse, Sport, Students

Introduction

A career is defined as the combination and sequence of roles played by a person throughout their lifetime. The root word carrus means a cart or chariot, from which the word via cararia (road) was derived, eventually leading to carrière and career (Super, 1980). Additionally, the Longman English Dictionary defines "career" as "a job or a profession for which one is

trained and which one intends to follow for the whole of one's life" (Longman, 1989).

People have to make many choices in life. These choices may range from what clothes to wear or what to eat for lunch to more significant decisions such as choosing a profession, selecting a spouse, or deciding on a university department. Ultimately, individuals must choose one of the available options. They may be satisfied with their final decision or experience a sense of regret (Erdurcan & Kırđök, 2017). The decision points in a career reflect encounters with various personal and situational determinants (Super, 1980).

An individual will spend a significant part of their life in their chosen profession, often spending more time in the work environment than with family and friends. In this context, regretting a career decision can negatively affect both life and work. Career decision regret can lead to reduced job and life satisfaction, as it may cause an individual to perceive their living conditions negatively, ultimately affecting their overall well-being (Köse, 2014). Therefore, it is crucial to determine whether individuals regret their career choices.

Regret is the emotion that has received the most research attention from decision theorists. Most people can readily recall or imagine situations where a poor decision led to painful regret, with theories and vivid demonstrations exploring the antecedents and consequences of this emotion (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002). To examine regret in an individual's life, it is necessary to explore the past, relate it to the present, and consider its potential influence on the future (Hennessey, 2011). In the context of career decision-making, this means that cognitive (ability), affective (personality), and conative (motivation and interest) traits have traditionally been considered separately rather than as integrated parts of the individual (Ackerman & Beier, 2003).

Regret is a frequently experienced emotion, evoked when a decision outcome compares unfavorably with the outcome that could have been achieved if a different choice had been made. This emotion typically arises when individuals perceive themselves as responsible for the outcome. The experience of regret focuses attention on one's role in the occurrence of the regretted outcome, motivating reflection on how the event could have been avoided and how similar situations can be prevented in the future (Zeelenberg, 1999). Self-exploration is a profoundly personal, reflective, and relational process (Hall & Chandler, 2005).

When a particular decision leads to an outcome that a person regrets or is unhappy with, they may ask themselves questions such as "What if I had not made that decision?" or "If only I had chosen differently." These thoughts are called counterfactuals because they counter what actually occurred (Bailey & Kinerson, 2005). The consequence of uncertain decision-making is termed

decision regret (Bell, 1982). Brehaut et al. (2003) define regret as remorse or distress over a decision.

Some individuals may have insufficient self-knowledge when it is time to make a career choice. They may be undecided due to a lack of information about professions, feel pressured by significant others, or hold non-functional beliefs. Therefore, it is important to identify such students and help them address their indecision to raise a happy generation and efficient workforce (Çakır, 2004). University students are a dynamic group, comprising both young adults beginning their educational journey and mature students returning to university to redesign or change their career path. Regardless of age, students undergo a unique transitional period during university, characterized by overlapping educational, personal, and career-oriented issues, including decision-making, indecision, and career confusion (Pott, 2012). This study aimed to investigate undergraduate students' regrets regarding their career decisions.

Methods

In this study, the most common technique in descriptive research models, the survey method was employed. Convenience sampling was preferred, and the study group consisted of 400 students (149 females, 251 males) from four different departments at Bartın University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, during the 2021-2022 academic year. The researchers developed an individual information form, and the 'Career Decision Regret Scale' was used. Necessary permissions were obtained for the questionnaire used in the research. The questionnaire was prepared digitally using Google Form®. Participants were asked to complete it in face-to-face during the 2021-2022 fall and spring semesters via various applications such as WhatsApp and QR Code during lesson breaks. Students were informed about the study's purpose and the questionnaire.

The questionnaire designed to assess the career decision regrets of sports science students consists of two parts. The first part collected information including age, gender, grade level, place of birth, parents' education and profession, number of siblings, economic status, place of residence, involvement in sports, the person who directed them to sports, and whether they were employed. The second part of the questionnaire comprised the "Career Decision Regret Scale" developed by Brehaut et al. (2003). The original scale consists of 5 items in a single dimension. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale, applied to various groups, was found to range between 0.81 and 0.92. In the validity study, there was a high correlation ($r = -0.40$ to -0.60) between the total score of the Decision Regret Scale and decision satisfaction, a positive correlation ($r = 0.31$ to 0.52) for decision confusion, and a negative correlation ($r = -0.25$ to -0.27)

for general quality of life. The original scale uses a 5-point Likert format, ranging from "1" (Totally Agree) to "5" (Totally Disagree), with items 2 and 4 reverse coded. To calculate the scores, one is subtracted from the value marked for each item. The resulting values are summed for each item, and a total score is obtained for all five items. This score is multiplied by five, yielding a value between 0 and 100 (Brehaut et al., 2003).

The Turkish adaptation, validity, and reliability process for the original scale was conducted by Erdurcan and Kırdök (2017). This adapted scale is considered a pioneer in measuring regret in career decision situations. Like the original, the Turkish version consists of five items in a single dimension using a 5-point Likert scale. To prevent misunderstandings and ensure objectivity in score calculation, the Turkish version was adjusted to range from 0 ("Do Not Agree") to 4 ("Totally Agree"). In the Turkish version, items 1, 3, and 5 are reverse coded. For scoring, the points of the reverse-coded items are adjusted, summed, and multiplied by 5, yielding a score between 0 and 100. A score of 0 and 24 indicates "no regret," 25-49 indicates "a little regret," 50-74 indicates "regret" and 75-100 indicates "very much regret" (Erdurcan & Kırdök, 2017). For data analysis, normality tests, descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage distributions), t-tests, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for independent groups were used. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. IBM® SPSS 21 software was used for the analysis.

Results

As a result of the analyses conducted to determine the career decision among students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences, it was found that the individuals experienced only a small degree of regret (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants' regret levels

Valid	400
Mean	38.05

The scale scores differed significantly based on students' age, department, grade level, place of birth, academic average, place of residence, part-time employment status, father's employment status, and education level. The ANOVA table for the participants' age variable is provided below.

Table 2. ANOVA results for the age variable and career decision regret

Age	N	Mean	sd	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Post Hoc (LSD)
1	67	43.73	29.71	Between Groups	7519.08	3	2506.36	4.21	.006*	1-2 3-2
2	213	34.08	21.20	Within Groups	235259.91	396	594.09			
3	104	41.39	25.84	Total	242779.00	399				
4	16	45.31	29.53							

* $p < 0.05$

Group 1: 17-19, Group 2: 20-22, Group 3: 23-25, Group 4: 25 and above

In Table 2, a significant difference was found between the age variable of participants and their career decision regret scores ($p < 0.05$). The LSD test revealed that the 17-19 and 23-25 age groups were significantly differed from the 20-22 age group. The ANOVA table for the department variable is provided below.

Table 3. ANOVA of the department variable and career decision regret

Departments	N	Mean	Sd	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Post Hoc (LSD)
1	100	33.90	17.84	Between Groups	26112.50	3	8704.167	15.90	.000*	2-1 2-3 2-4
2	100	52.00	30.77	Within Groups	216666.50	396	547.13			
3	100	33.95	18.64	Total	242779.00	399				
4	100	32.35	23.98							

* $p < 0.05$ **Group 1:** Physical Education Teaching, **G2:** Coaching Education, **G3:** Sports Management **G4:** Recreation

In Table 3, a significant difference was found between the department variable of the participants and their career decision regret scores ($p < 0.05$). The LSD test revealed that students in the Department of Coaching Education had higher career decision regret scores than the other groups. The ANOVA table for the grade level variable is provided below.

Table 4. ANOVA results for the grade level variable and career decision regret

Grade level	N	Mean	Sd	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Post Hoc (LSD)
1	120	29.38	18.94	Between Groups	13204.95	3	44.01	7.59	.000*	2-1 3-1 4-1
2	56	43.57	24.07	Within Groups	229574.04	396	579.73			
3	146	40.89	25.53	Total	242779.00	399				
4	78	42.12	28.01							

* $p < 0.05$ **Group 1:** 1st, **Group 2:** 2nd, **Group 3:** 3rd, **Group 4:** 4th and above

In Table 4, a significant difference was found between the grade level variable of the participants and the career decision regret scores ($p < 0.05$). The LSD test revealed that all grade levels, except the first-year group, had higher career decision regret scores. The ANOVA table for the place of birth variable is provided below.

Table 5. ANOVA results for the place of birth variable and career decision regret

Place of birth	N	Mean	Sd	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Post Hoc (LSD)
1	31	43.06	26.51	Between Groups	10252.137	3	3417.37	5.82	.001*	1-4 2-4 3-4
2	132	40.95	23.38	Within Groups	232526.86	396	587.189			
3	149	40.00	25.85	Total	242779.00	399				
4	88	28.64	21.69							

* $p < 0.05$ **Group 1:** Village, **Group 2:** Town, **Group 3:** City, **Group 4:** Metropole

In Table 5, a significant difference was found between the place of birth variable of the participants and the career decision regret scores ($p < 0.05$). The LSD test revealed that participants from village, town, and city backgrounds had higher career decision regret scores compared to those from the metropole area. The ANOVA table for the academic average variable is provided below.

Table 6. ANOVA results for the academic average variable and career decision regret

Academic average	N	Mean	Sd	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Post Hoc (LSD)
1	64	25.00	17.66	Between Groups	40122.34	3	13374.113	26.13	.000*	2-1, 2-3, 2-4, 3-1 3-4
2	65	56.08	28.26	Within Groups	202656.66	396	511.75			
3	188	40.35	22.18	Total	242779.00	399				
4	83	28.80	24.66							

* $p < 0.05$

Group 1: 0.0-0.99, Group 2: 1.0-1.99, Group 3: 2.0-2.99 Group 4: 3.0-4.0

In Table 6, a significant difference was found between the academic average of the participants and the career decision regret scores ($p < 0.05$). The LSD test revealed that the 1.0-1.99 academic average group had higher career decision regret scores than the other groups. Additionally, the 2.0-2.99 academic average group scored higher than the 0.0-0.99 and 3.0-4.0 academic average groups. The ANOVA table for the place of residence variable is provided below.

Table 7. ANOVA of the place of residence variable and career decision regret

Place of residence	N	Mean	sd	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Post Hoc (LSD)
1	41	42.20	21.96	Between Groups	16305.58	4	4076.39	7.110	.000*	1-3, 5-1, 5-3, 5-4
2	3	31.67	25.65	Within Groups	226473.41	395	573.35			
3	138	35.72	25.05	Total	242779.00	399				
4	155	33.61	20.97							
5	63	51.67	28.97							

* $p < 0.05$

Group 1: Family, Group 2: Relatives, Group 3: Friends, Group 4: Dormitory, Group 5: Others

In Table 7, a significant difference was found between the place of residence variable of the participants and the career decision regret scores ($p < 0.05$). The LSD test revealed that the group living with their family had significantly differed from the group living with friends. Additionally, the group living in other types of accommodation had significantly differed from the living with family, friends, or in dormitories. The t-test results for the part-time working variable are provided below.

Table 8. T-test results for the part-time working variable and career decision regret

Part-time working students	N	Mean	sd	T	P
Yes	152	47.53	27.28	5.92	.000*
No	248	32.24	20.93		

*P < 0.05

Table 8 shows a significant difference between part-time working students (mean = 27.28) and those not working (mean = 32.24). Part-time working students have more regrets about career decisions than non-working students. The t-test results for the father's working status variable are provided below.

Table 9. T-test results for the father's working status variable and career decision regret

Father's working status	N	Mean	sd	T	P
Yes	298	40.15	25.42	3.20	.002*
No	102	31.91	21.26		

*P < 0.05

Table 9 shows a significant difference between students whose fathers are employed (mean = 40.15) and those whose fathers are not employed (mean = 31.91). Students whose fathers are employed have more regrets about their career decisions than those whose fathers are not. The ANOVA table for the father's educational level variable is provided below.

Table 10. ANOVA results for the father's educational level and career decision regret

Father's educational level	N	Mean	sd	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	p	Post Hoc (LSD)
1	30	30.67	24.59	Between Groups	99795.82	4	2494.95	4.23	.002*	3-1, 3-2, 4-1, 4-2
2	169	33.67	21.13	Within Groups	232779.18	395	589.36			
3	148	42.43	24.60	Total	242779.00	399				
4	51	44.51	31.61							
5	2	30.00	35.35							

*p < 0.05

Group 1: Not educated, G2: Primary, G3: High school, G4: Bachelor, G5: Master/PhD

Table 10 shows a significant difference between the father's educational level and the career decision regret scores ($p < 0.05$). As a result of the LSD test to identify which groups differed, it was determined that the high school graduate group had significantly differed from the not-educated and primary school graduate groups. Additionally, the bachelor graduate group scored significantly differed from the not-educated and primary graduate groups.

Discussion

As a result of the analyses conducted to determine the career decision regrets of students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences, it was found that individuals had minimal regret (mean = 38.05). Köse (2019) reported similar findings of "little regret" in the study 'Teachers and Administrators Regret Due to Their Career Choice'. This result is expected for these students because they are closely engaged in at least one team or individual sport. Individuals involved in sports typically have a passion for it, leading to low levels of regret about career decisions. Students participate in sports with enthusiasm and dedication, which contributes to their success. Even if they have not yet achieved a prominent position, they believe they will in the future. These factors positively influence their career decisions.

The current study identified significant differences between career decision regrets and variables such as age, department, grade level, place of birth, academic average, place of residence, part-time work, father's employment status, and educational level. The scale scores were significantly differed by age variable. According to further statistic analysis, it was found that the 17-19 and 23-25 age groups' career decision regret scores significantly differed from the 20-22 age group. Sullivan et al. (2007) also found significant differences related to age, with regrets being more pronounced in the 35-44 and 55 and older age groups. Matarazzo et al. (2021) found that regret diminished with age. However, Demir (2023) found no significant difference in career decision regrets among physicians based on age, which contrasts with the current study.

A significant difference was found between career decision regrets and participants' departments, with students from the "Department of Coaching Education" exhibiting higher regret scores than those from other departments. Kılıç and Günel (2023) also found significant variation in career decision regret based on department, which aligns with the current study. Additionally, Çakır and Gönen (2022) found that students in the "Recreation Department" had significantly higher career decision regrets compared to students in other departments.

The study determined that all other grade levels had higher career decision regret scores compared to the freshmen group. Çakır and Gönen (2022) found a significant difference in career decision regret scores based on education level, particularly with higher regrets in higher grade levels, which aligns with the current findings. Conversely Doğanülkü and Güneşlice (2022) found no significant difference in proactive career behavior scores across class levels, which differs from the current study.

Significant differences were found based on place of birth, with village, town, and city groups having higher career decision regret scores than the metropole group. This might be due to a stronger desire for success and

better career opportunities among those from less advantaged areas compared to those from metropole areas, who may feel more satisfied with their career choices. Biricik-Gülseren (2019) supports this, noting that people with negative affect are more likely to experience career regret due to a tendency to disregard the possibility of achieving success.

According to the academic average variable, significant differences were found, with the 1.0-1.99 group having higher career decision regret scores than the other groups. Additionally, the 2.0-2.99 group was significantly differed from the 0.0-0.99 and 3.0-4.0 groups. Mora (2010) also associated regret with educational characteristics, such as final university grades, which is consistent with the current study.

In the current study, scale scores differed significantly based on the place of residence variable. It was found that career decision regret scores of students living with their families were significantly differed from the students living with friends. Additionally, students living in the 'other options' group was significantly differed from the students living with family, friends, or in dormitories. Living with family and in other types of accommodation might provide less confidence and drive students to seek more successful and prestigious careers, resulting in higher regret levels.

A significant difference was also observed between career decision regrets and part-time working status. Part-time working students expressed more regrets about their career decisions than those who were not working. Part-time work may intensify students' passion, leading them to experience greater regrets about their career choices.

Significant differences were found according to the father's employment status. Students whose fathers were employed had higher career decision regret scores compared to those whose fathers were not working. Observing their fathers' complex work conditions might lead students to desire better careers, resulting in higher levels of regret.

The scale scores also varied significantly based on the father's educational level. Students with fathers who had only a high school education had higher career decision regret scores compared to those whose fathers had no formal education or only completed primary school. Additionally, students whose fathers held a bachelor's degree had higher regret scores than those whose fathers had no formal education or only completed primary school. This may be due to the higher expectations that children of well-educated fathers might have. In reality, education does not always guarantee a promising career or suitable living conditions. Roese and Summerville (2005) found that the top six regrets in life, according to their meta-analysis, include education, career, romance, parenting, the self, and leisure, which aligns with the findings of the current study.

Conclusion

Career development, particularly the decision-making period, is complex for students in sports. In the current study, it was found that students studying in the Department of Sports Sciences at Bartın University had little regret about their career decisions (mean = 38.05). The scale scores of the students varied significantly according to their age, department, grade level, place of birth, academic average, place of residence, part-time working status, father's employment status, and educational level. At this point, faculties could involve students in sports-related associations. Additionally, career days could be organized by including various sport-related sectors. These initiatives would help students understand career opportunities and potentially alleviate their regrets about career decisions during their education. As a limitation, it should be noted that the study group consists of students from only one university. Future studies could benefit from increasing the number of participants by including students from the sports sciences faculties of different universities.

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