

FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF CONSERVATORY MUSIC DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

KONSERVATUVAR MÜZİK ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN GELECEK BEKLENTİLERİ

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Abstract

Conservatories are institutions that aim to train high-quality artists. What are the future expectations of students who have been studying for this purpose for many years? This research aims to examine the goals and career plans of the students of the conservatory music department. The research was carried out with a qualitative approach and the data were collected with a semi-structured interview form. Online interviews were conducted with eleven senior students from two conservatories in Ankara. After the recorded interviews were transcribed into text, they were analyzed according to the determined themes. As a result of the research, it was determined that the students of the conservatory music department were satisfied with the education they received. Students feel ready to graduate. Although the students of the conservatory state that they want to go abroad and continue their art life there, they believe that these goals will not be realized. Many consider obtaining a pedagogical formation certificate but see music teaching as a temporary job. The career goal of the majority of conservatory students is to work as an academician at universities. It has been determined that although the conservatories, which aim to train high-quality artists, provide education at this level, students choose other goals before they graduate.

Keywords: Music Education, Conservatory, Future Expectations

Özet

Konservatuvarlar yüksek nitelikli sanatçıların yetiştirilmesinin amaçlandığı kurumlardır. Uzun yıllar bu amaç yolunda öğrenimlerini sürdüren öğrencilerin gelecek beklentileri nasıldır? Bu araştırmada konservatuvar müzik bölümü öğrencilerinin mezuniyete hazırlık durumları, hedefleri ve kariyer planları incelenmiştir. Araştırma nitel bir yaklaşımla yürütülmüş ve veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formuyla toplanmıştır. Ankara’da bulunan iki konservatuvarın on bir son sınıf öğrencisiyle çevrimiçi olarak görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Kayıt altına alınan görüşmeler metin haline getirildikten sonra belirlenen temalara göre analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda konservatuvar müzik bölümü öğrencilerinin aldıkları eğitimden memnun oldukları belirlenmiştir. Öğrenciler kendilerini mezun olmaya hazır hissetmektedirler. Konservatuvar öğrencileri, yurt dışına gitmek ve orada sanat hayatlarına devam etmek istediklerini belirtmelerine rağmen bu hedeflerinin gerçekleşmeyeceğine inanmaktadırlar. Birçoğu pedagojik formasyon sertifikası almayı düşünmekte fakat müzik öğretmenliğini geçici bir iş olarak görmektedir.

Konservatuvar öğrencilerinin çoğunluğunun kariyer hedefinde üniversitelerde akademisyen olarak çalışmak bulunmaktadır. Yüksek nitelikli sanatçılar yetiştirilmesi amaçlanan konservatuvarların bu seviyede eğitim vermesine karşın, öğrencilerin henüz mezun olmadan başka hedefler seçtikleri belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müzik Eğitimi, Konservatuvar, Gelecek Beklentisi

1. INTRODUCTION

Conservatories are institutions that provide education in different branches of art. These institutions have provided the training of individuals who want to choose art as a profession in line with their establishment purposes, and thus they have made significant contributions to the cultural development of societies (Türkmen, 2013). The most intense of the art education fields carried out in conservatories is the field of music (Ergen & Tanrıseven, 2015).

It is aimed to train high-level artists in the music departments of conservatories. Alter (1989) described conservatory music students as ambitious, single-minded, and gifted. Special talented students who have been studying art for a long time are expected to continue their lives as artists in this direction.

The first conservatory in Turkey was established in 1923 (Uçan, 2005), and this number has gradually increased over the years. Currently, 44 conservatories continue their educational activities (YÖK, 2021). Ten of them operate under the name of Turkish Music Conservatory. Of the 44 conservatories, four are in private universities and forty are in state universities.

There are many fields in which conservatory graduates can work. They can work as artists in choirs and orchestras affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the official Turkish state television (TRT), and municipalities. It is known that they work in orchestras established by various foundations and companies apart from official institutions. Apart from being an orchestra artist, it is known that they are engaged in various artistic activities in the music market for their purposes. In addition, they can work in public and private institutions in areas such as teaching and art consultancy.

Many conservatory graduates receive pedagogical formation certificates and work as music teachers in public and private institutions. With the increase in the number of universities in Turkey in recent years, the number of music departments has also increased. Due to the increase in music departments, many conservatory graduates started to work as academicians in these departments.

Hundreds of artists graduate from conservatories every year. Currently, there are 15566 undergraduate students studying music and performing arts in Turkey. Contrary to this number, it can be said that the number of orchestras and art ensembles is limited.

In this context, the subject of the research is to determine the plans of conservatory students who are trained to be artists and to examine how these plans are compatible with their education.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Model

The research was conducted from a qualitative perspective. Qualitative research is the research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview, and document review are used, and the process of revealing perceptions and events realistically and holistically in their natural environment is followed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

The interview technique, which is frequently used in qualitative research, was used to determine the future expectations of conservatory students. Cohen and Manion (1994) describes this technique as a controlled and purposeful form of verbal communication between the researcher and the participant.

2.2. Study Group

The study group consisted of eleven undergraduate students continuing their education in the instrument education departments of state conservatories. Information about the study group is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Study Group

	Group	f	%
University	Hacettepe	8	72.8
	Hacı Bayram Veli	3	27.2
Gender	Female	4	36.4
	Male	7	63.6
Musical Instrument	Clarinet	1	9.1
	Saxophone	1	9.1
	Oboe	1	9.1
	Contrabass	1	9.1
	Flute	3	27.2
	Piano	1	9.1
	Tanbur	2	18.2
	Oud	1	9.1
Total		11	100

The study group consisted of 11 music students, 8 from Hacettepe University Music Department and 3 from Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University Turkish Music State Conservatory. All students are final year students.

Table 2. Grade Averages

	f	%
2.66 - 3.20	5	45.4
3.21 - 3.44	4	36.4
3.44 – 3.70	2	18.2
	11	100

The grade point averages of the participants ranged from 2.66 to 3.70. In general, it can be said that the students in the study group were successful.

None of the students work in a paid job. All students receive financial support from their families. Six students receive student loans from the government. Information about the financial situation of the families is presented below.

Table 3. Family Income Status

Income (Turkish Lira)	f	%
6.000 – 7.000	2	18.2
7.000 – 10.000	6	54.5
10.000 – 15.000	3	27.3
	11	100

All participants' parents are alive. The parents of two students are divorced. Four students give private music lessons and three students earn additional income through live music.

2.3. Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool in the study. The questions in the form were prepared to determine the participants' preparation for graduation, their goals, and their career plans.

Interviews were held online using the Zoom program. The data collection process was carried out in September and October 2021. The interviews lasted between 10-15 minutes. All interviews were recorded after the participants were informed.

3. FINDING

The recordings of the interviews about the future expectations of the students of the conservatory music department were converted into text. These texts were reported according to the themes determined as the current situation, targets, career plans. The data obtained about the determined themes are presented respectively.

3.1. Current Situation

Students have been receiving music education from an early age. In line with the guidance of experts and with the support of their families, they turned to this field.

I started taking music lessons in primary school with the guidance of my family. Since then, I have been incessantly involved with music. Since I love music and my instrument so much, I never thought of doing another job. Frankly, I feel like I'm a little special.

All my memories have music. Since there are many musicians in my family, I can say that I was born into music. I think I'm in the best place I can be right now. Of course, it can be even better, but considering the current conditions, I can say that I am in the best school.

I will never know if I would have succeeded in another field. But I would be unhappy. My mother directed me, I don't think my father wanted it very much at first, but later he got used to it.

As a result of the interviews with the participants, it was determined that they were happy to study in the music department of the conservatory.

I have learned other instruments for many years. When I was in high school, I voluntarily turned to this instrument. It was as if I had changed the field in music. There are not many options for the department in Turkey anyway. There are good teachers. I also benefit a lot from musicians outside of school. They have been very supportive of my development. Because there is no end to the music, you can never say I'm okay. In general, I am satisfied with the school.

I feel very lucky, I have an excellent instrument teacher. We have been working together for a long time.

I started in another city, then I came here with a horizontal transfer. The conditions here are more suitable for me. If I had the opportunity, I would like to go to Istanbul. Those who study there are more advantageous in many respects.

Most of the participants close to graduation think that they are ready for this situation. Some students are concerned that their comfort environment will change.

Frankly, you're a little nervous, I've been a student for many years and I'm used to this situation. Since I am a student, I am not sure what awaits me next year.

There is no end to goals in music. I think I made the most of it here. I don't think staying here will do me much good anymore.

To progress in music, it is necessary to change the environment you are in. Otherwise, you get into a vicious circle. I am now ready to change my environment.

I am an artist and I think I can find other places to express myself. This gets me a little exciting.

3.2. Targets

The goal of most of the participants is to go abroad. Participants who receive Turkish music education do not think of leaving the country. Many participants see their stated goals as dreams. They think that it is very difficult to realize.

I have been training to be an instrument artist for many years. Naturally, I have dreams in this direction. I want to play in an orchestra.

I am trying to improve my English. I will try to catch education opportunities abroad. I have friends who went abroad and stayed there. I also want to follow their path.

I would like to play in the Berlin Philharmonic. But be realistic. I don't think I can reach my goals here. A close friend of mine went to Austria and got a master's degree there and joined an orchestra. My first goal is to go abroad.

I have my compositions. I love to produce. Apart from playing the instrument, I sing. I want to make an album of my compositions.

I have to go to America to realize my dreams. There are many factors in it. First I need to earn some money. When I graduate, I plan to settle in Istanbul. Maybe I can make the necessary infrastructure preparations for abroad.

The majority of the participants think that they should go abroad to realize their dreams. But again, most of them think that they can't make their dreams come true.

There are imaginary goals and there are realistic goals. You have to be a little realistic. The situation of the country is clear, my most realistic goal is to be an academic. I have set this as my realistic goal and am considering moving in that direction.

3.3. Career Plans

Many of the participants are considering continuing their careers at university. Again, most participants want to gain the right to be a teacher by taking pedagogical formation. They often think of teaching as a temporary job.

My dreams are different, of course, but the country also has realities. It's really hard to get a steady income. The number of orchestras and cadres is limited. To continue my life, I first think of academia. At the same time, I will take formation training. If I can continue my higher education, maybe I can teach music in private schools. A realistic career expectation for me is to be an academic.

I think our generation all want to be academics. But I don't think they imagined it. As an instrument artist, I will proceed in this direction. I've put a lot of effort into it and I have to work even harder to achieve my dreams while I'm still young. I will realize my plan abroad and become an orchestra artist.

After graduation, I will continue my education. A master's degree is now obligatory. I will continue as a student. Many cities have universities. I will continue my career as an academic. I'll have to take the formation. Whatever happens, I don't want to be broke. I don't want to go to other cities. I can work here as a music teacher in private schools. I will also follow the orchestra cadres. I want to be an orchestra artist if I can get in.

I have been teaching private courses for several years. I think I'm good at this job. That's why I plan to teach by taking pedagogical formation education. I'm thinking of becoming a public teacher by taking the exam. I don't have very high career goals. But I don't want to go anywhere. If I can't be appointed to the places I want, there are some private schools where I want to work. I can work there. Maybe in the future, I can open a private music education course.

Most of the participants stated that they plan to work as academicians. To the question of how many books do you read on average per year, half of the participants answered "I don't actually read much". When asked why they want to be an academician, most of the participants said that they think they will be good educators, especially about their instruments.

I have been studying instruments for years and I am a good performer. Can there be a better teacher than me? Apart from instruments, I can also give lessons such as music theory and hearing. Participants think that musicians are in a very difficult situation, especially in the Covid-19 pandemic. This seems to have affected their career plans.

Actually, I would like to make an album and exist in the music market. But in the covid process, we saw again that if you don't have a stable income, you can go hungry at any time. For this reason, my first goal is to earn a stable income, then maybe I can follow my dreams.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, the future expectations of conservatory music students trained as artists were investigated. For this purpose, 11 senior students of two conservatories operating in Ankara were interviewed. The interviews were conducted online and the participants were informed and recorded. The obtained interviews were converted into text and analyzed according to the determined themes. The themes are current status, goals, and career plans.

As a result of the interviews, it was determined that the participants were satisfied with their education at the conservatory. Students are satisfied with the level of education they receive and their school. They see themselves as competent enough to graduate. They think that there is no end to progress musically. However, they think that they need to change their environment in order to progress further. Few participants are worried about graduating. According to this result, it can be said that conservatories have achieved their goal of raising good artists.

Many conservatory students dream of becoming instrument artists in the future. Again, many think that they can realize their dreams abroad. The reason for this is that they think that they will not get enough attention in Turkey. Although many participants want to continue their lives as artists abroad, they think that this cannot happen. They stated that the biggest obstacle is financial impossibilities. They see themselves as capable of working in orchestras abroad.

Turkish music conservatory students, on the other hand, do not aim to go abroad. Again, they aim to continue their lives as artists and they think that Turkey is the right place for this.

The majority of the students participating in the research are considering taking pedagogical formation education. Although teaching is not their career goal, they think that a teaching diploma may be necessary. They think they can teach as long as they wait to achieve other career goals. Many do not want to go to other cities. That's why they plan to work in private schools. Meanwhile, they think that they will be able to seize opportunities for orchestral artists.

Conservatory students see the most realistic career goal as being an academician at universities. They stated that they could go to different cities for these career goals.

They stated that they could give up their orchestra dreams when they found the staff at the university. This situation is at the same level in both conservatory groups.

Although the students saw academics as the most realistic goal, half of the group, for example, stated that they had never read a book. They want to become academics to have a good salary and a respected title in society. Since students are good instrument players, they think that they can give instrument lessons at universities at a good level.

Conservatory students see themselves as good instrumentalists and state that their goal is to work in orchestras, but they put academics in their career goals. They see music teaching as a temporary job to continue their lives.

Similar to the results of this research, Taş and Görsev (2018) determined that conservatory students were undecided about their plans, and their priority was to be an academician. Aras (2011), in his study examining the hopelessness levels of conservatory students, determined that the students had the lowest average in the dimension of feelings and expectations about the future. Yener and Apaydınlı (2016) emphasized that there are important problems in the planning of institutions providing vocational music education. It can be said that this lack of a plan significantly affects student priorities and future expectations.

Considering the conservatories as an institution that trains artists, it can be said that they fulfill their duties. Students think that they are good instrument artists. However, the fact that their career goals are different shows that there is an important employment problem especially for conservatory graduates in Turkey. They said goodbye to the goals they dreamed of before they even graduated, instead they set other goals. The career goals they set are thought-provoking. This situation shows that art policies in Turkey should be reviewed at the highest level.

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