



## I WILL BE AN ASTRANOUT WHEN I GROW UP, BUT HOW?\*

**Asst. Prof. Melahat ÖNEREN**

Kırıkkale University Business Department  
*melahatoneren@mynet.com*

**Res. Asst. Tayfun ARAR**

Kırıkkale University Business Department  
*tayfunarar@kku.edu.tr*

**Eda Sultan ARAR**

Kırıkkale University Business Department  
*edasultanarar@gmail.com*

### Abstract

When asked what is wished to be in future, people would reply a well-reputed occupation that they only know by the environment but a little about the fact. As time goes by, especially in college years when the students start to know about the professions related with their departments, financial and employment situation of the home country, they realize that there is either none or weak relationship among their dream jobs and the reality which results in whole life-disappointment. For people to determine the best career path, they first should be aware of themselves and then the professional environment. In this research the aim is to analyze the effect of personal SWOT analysis in career planning process by principal component analysis in university students. The results showed students mostly determine their career path by the awareness of their strengths as a 38.1% importance degree. The least determining factor is the awareness of close environmental threats by 10.25%. This situation is interpreted in the conclusion part.

**Keywords:** Career Planning, SWOT Analysis, Self SWOT Analysis, Principal Component Analysis.

### 1. Introduction

Business firms need to adhere to the strategies they apply in addition to the mission and vision they have in terms of achieving their short- and long-term goals (David, 2007: 61). Business firms that do not embrace strategic management resemble vehicles that have gone without navigation (Grant et al., 2016: 100). Just like business firms, people also have basic objectives that they have to fulfill individually throughout their lives. One of them is about their careers. They need career plans to be able to start and continue their careers effectively. This is exactly the point of strategic management in the business as well as people's being aware of themselves and their environment in the well-defined Self SWOT Analysis. SWOT

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Analysis which was emerged at the beginning of the 1950s as a result of Harvard Business School work (Panagiotou, 2003: 8), is essentially a kind of analysis that enables a company to identify and use the strengths and opportunities of a company while at the same time minimizing the impact of the weaknesses and threats (Kolbina, 2015: 74). SWOT Analysis is usually a technique used within the scope of strategic analysis for industries or countries in the direction of emergence (Alexandru, 2015: 28; Brooks et al., 2014: 24; Helms et al., 2011: 270; Palacio and Navarro, 2011: 168; Rizzo and Kim, 2005: 119). On the other hand, the analysis that is included in the literature as Self-SWOT is used to examine the individual's knowledge, strengths or abilities, to detect weak spots, to benefit opportunities and to neutralize threats (Krishna, 2014: 45). Therefore, using SWOT analysis for the individual is a rational method for the self-awareness of the individual in the career planning process. Because if the individual can evaluate his important power towards himself and determine his flaws, if he can see and evaluate opportunities, he can be better prepared for their career if also he can anticipate the threats and take precautions (Addams and Allred, 2013: 45). Hereby while strengths and weaknesses are considered as internal factors, opportunities and threats are as external factors that can be influential on a person or a company. While strengths are constituted by skills, education, experience, environment and characteristics; opportunities are constituted by technology, economy, demographics and legislations (Addams and Allred, 2015: 47); threats and weaknesses arise in which the deficiencies of opportunities and strengths. Self-SWOT assessment is used to examine an individual's knowledge, strengths or talents, focus on identifying weaknesses, categorize opportunities, and override threats. This self-reflection and evaluation can help an individual be informed of his beliefs and values and what is really valuable in life. It can play a significant role in deciding to understand the values that determine its principles and in personal relationships (Krishna, 2014: 45).

According to a definition, career planning is the development of axiom plans about setting career expectations and goals through his knowledge, ability and interests, in direction of his strengths and weaknesses by evaluating himself (Uyargil et al., 2008: 309). For another definition, individual career planning is a process that enables an individual to assess his or her own abilities and interests, to examine career opportunities, to set career goals, to identify the means to achieve the goals, and to develop appropriate ways (Bingöl, 2014: 343). Many researchers agree that career planning can be defined as an individual initiative. Thus, an individual looks for opportunities and identifies his strengths and weaknesses, identifies career goals, and promotes career development needs. At this point, the individual's career planning process requires an individual SWOT analysis because of the factors that are

effective. There are direct or indirect narratively studies in the literature those suggest that the person should be able to do Self-SWOT analysis to do an effective career planning that is to say he should be aware of the opportunities and threats in his social and professional environment with his strengths and weaknesses (Addams and Allred, 2013: 46; Bingöl, 2014: 343-344; Inger, 2016: 2; Kosunen, 2011: 205; Pearce, 2007: 25; Santiago, 1999: 54; Qin et al., 2011: 1148; Uyargil et al., 2008:317-318; VonBergen, 2013: 55). In addition to these studies, Betterman (1984: 239) pointed out that it is wrong for people to decide only for a reputable profession in relation to the stage of department or university selection, and emphasized that one should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of this process. Within the scope of our study, the other two components of the SWOT analysis (O and T) are becoming increasingly important nowadays and need to be analyzed. Stoeber et al. (2016: 256) studied the personality traits of university students on career planning attitudes and found that perfectionism describes between 8-12% of the variance in career planning. In a similar study (Soysal ve Söylemez, 2014: 23), the factors affecting the career planning of the students of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences were examined. In that study; personal qualities and talents, professional dignity, current developments, economic factors are found to be influential. Similarly, Polat et al. (2016: 29) identify these factors as occupational maturity and general self-sufficiency. In another study on the career choices of the students of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (Smith et al., 2012: 15), it was observed that there was a significant increase in the conceptions of the career path of students who plan career development. According to Kosunen (2011: 207), as a result of the wrong section selection, 25% of the graduates aged 25-30 years who participated in the study stated that they were unable to find a suitable career life. In addition, 58% of those who started the job indicated that they were working in a job they hated. According to the same study, 25% of the participants stated that their peers had left themselves behind in the career context. There are some factors which play a role in the reasons for the students of the Faculty of Economics to choose their faculties for education. These (Smith et al., 2012: 15) are a wide range of jobs, reputable business opportunities for family and friends. According to the same study, when students do not match their qualifications and the faculty they choose to pursue in their career life where they are supposed to start, without questioning the value judgments, the doubt will result in disappointments that are difficult to return with uncertainty and incompatibility.

Today, career planning leads to pessimism among young people, causing their courage to break. The main reasons for this are competition in today's business life, dynamism in the

nature of occupation, uncertainty in the socio-economic situation and bad economic remnants of the past (Stoeber et al., 2016: 256). In a 1984 study, it was found that two important decisions that a career planner should make professionally at the beginning of his career are school choice and a career choice after school (Betterman, 1984: 234). In the same study, it is stated that according to the statistics of the year 1954, people frequently changed jobs because of wrong career choice. Previous generations had career life with long-term career successes such as promotions earned, established difficult goals, being rewarded etc. in certain behavioral rules that guaranteed job security, financial rewards, and even retirement (Wagner; 2010: 17). But nowadays this situation has lost its validity. Now, people have to be proactive and more rational in their career path. Among the common characteristics of today's generation is the change of work many times till get satisfied from the work and the workplace (Uyargil et al., 2008: 333). However, this issue is beyond the scope of this study. In this study, it is emphasized at the point beforehand of these job changing times by doing a Self-SWOT Analysis to choose the best suitable career path. The aim is to analyze the effect of personal SWOT analysis in career planning process by principal component analysis in university students. In doing that, regarding the deficiency of SWOT analysis that is the lack of a method about determining the importance levels of components (Kajanus et al., 2004: 499), it was analyzed the variances explained by each component on career planning.

## 2. Methodology

In this research the main assumption is that; as growing up, everyone is aware of both their strengths and weaknesses and also the opportunities and threats around, in their career planning process. The aim is to clarify the effect of each component of self-SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat) analysis on career planning. Under the light of this purpose, the main steps are as follows:



**Figure 1.** Steps of the Research

In the first and second year of college, students cannot see what is happening around exactly and keeps playing the “high school student role”. The majority of unrelated courses in their schedules and adaptation problems to college have great importance in this situation. But by having more selective courses related with the interest of the student in his schedule and starting applying for job opportunities, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students are getting much more aware of business life requirements. Thus the research population is constituted by 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year

college students of the administrative sciences faculty who study in one of the state universities in Turkey (N=400). The sample is composed of (n=300) people by convenience sampling method. The valid response rate however is n=250 by 83%. The reason for choosing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> degree students is to support and strengthen the main assumption of this study that is “awareness level of personal SWOT analysis on career planning process” and to get more reliable results. Then, the questionnaire with two parts has been formed. In the first part, demographic items (gender, marital status, occupational status and monthly income) was placed. In the second part there are career planning scale items which consist each of S, W, O and T gathered from career scales existing in literature (Erdoğan, 2009: 143; Kalafat, 2014: 157). The items of questionnaire are as follows:

**Table 1.** Questionnaire Form

1		I know what to do for achieving my career goals	S1
2	S	I know the required talents of mine in career planning	S2
3		I know myself, my needs and my desires in career planning	S3
4		I have a potential to overcome any conflicts in achieving my career goals	S4
5		It is difficult for me to determine career goals	W
6	W	It is difficult for me to relate my talents with a special career plan	W
7		I am not sure whether I will be successful at my profession or not	W
8		It is difficult for me to find the right job	W
9		I am interested in career opportunities around me	O
10	O	My faculty directs me in achieving my career goals	O
11		My faculty provides me an opportunity for career planning and development	O
12		I am aware of career opportunities in both faculty and university	O
13		I am aware possible external problems occurring in individual career planning	T1
14	T	I suppose my demographics (age, gender etc.) will be problem in my career planning	T2
15		I suppose legal liabilities will be problem in my career planning	T3
16		I suppose the social-economic situation of the country will be problem in my career planning	T4

In the questionnaire, while questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16 are cited and revised from Erdoğan (2009: 143); the rest items are cited and revised from Kalafat (2014: 157). As seen above, there are four main parts which represent the components of SWOT analysis that include four questions per each, 16 items at total. Due to being Turkish as well, the questionnaire asked to students in Turkish. At the third step, principal component analysis is practiced via IBM SPSS 21.0 program. Based on results, loads of SWOT factors are determined. Finally, to find the relative importance of SWOT factors, normalization is processed of those loads.

### 3. Results

The Table below is about the frequency results of sample's demographics.

**Table 2.** Demographics Distribution

<i>Monthly Income</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>0-1000 TL</b>	15	6	6
<b>1001-2000 TL</b>	71	28.4	34.4
<b>2001-3000 TL</b>	81	32.4	66.8
<b>3001 and above</b>	83	33.2	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	250		
<i>Gender</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Male</b>	111	44.4	44.4
<b>Female</b>	139	55.6	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	250		
<i>Marital Status</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Married</b>	3	1.2	1.2
<b>Single</b>	247	98.8	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	250		
<i>Occupational Status</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	13	5.2	5.2
<b>No</b>	237	94.8	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	250		

The sample is constituted by 44.4% males and 55.6% females. By the other demographics, it is seen that majority of students' monthly incomes are 3001 TL and above by 33.2% and 98.8% are single. On the other hand the ones who work are only 5.2% of the sample. This situation may indicate that the most of the students are living with their parents who could have an impact on career planning process as both positively and negatively. Positive side of this situation is that the student can take his parents as role models in deciding his career life by investigating the pros and cons of his parents' jobs. The negative side could arise from the statement that although the student is grown enough to survive in life by his own; because he will not suffer from the "realities" of the "real life" to stand strong, it would be harder to gain successes in his career without knowing what "pain" is.

After demographics, as the Stage 3 of research indicates, Principal Component Analysis is performed. Before doing this, the normality of the distribution is checked via Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The result shows though p value is below .05; according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), because Skewness and Kurtosis range is between -1.5 and +1.5, it should be stated that data are normally distributed. In our study Skewness and Kurtosis values of S, W, O, T are -.016, -.526; .414, -.369; .20, -.742; .476, -.076 respectively. After then, correlation among variables is checked with Pearson Correlation analysis. Because there is non-anomaly among the correlation values ( $r < 0.75$ ), none of the items have been removed. Next thing is to check the reliability of the items as seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Reliability Analysis Results

Component	Cronbach's Alpha
S	.784
W	.776
O	.501
T	.719

Despite the S, W and T's Cronbach's Alpha values,  $r=.501$  for opportunities. However the whole reliability results are acceptable to continue for analysis. Then, PCA (Principal Component Analysis) is performed. KMO value is found as  $.766$  ( $\text{sig}=.000$ ) which is counted as "acceptable" as seen in Table 4.

**Table 4.** KMO and Bartlett's Test

Component	Cronbach's Alpha
Kaiser-Meyer-Oikin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.766
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	106.144
df	120
Sig.	.000

PCA subsumes 16 SWOT variables in five factors. While strengths, weaknesses and opportunities constitute a factor in themselves, the first item of opportunities is factor loaded with strengths. Besides, threats are divided into two factors as; while 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> items are grouped in one factor, the rest is grouped in the other factor. After revising the items of T, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> items are renamed as "close environment threats" and coded as "CET"; 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> items are renamed as "broad environment threats" and coded as BET. The rotated component matrix is seen in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
O1	.578				
O2		.868			
O3		.874			
O4		.663			
S1	.746				
S2	.743				
S3	.766				
S4	.702				
T1					.551
T2					.586
T3				.757	
T4				.714	
W1			.741		
W2			.822		
W3			.498		
W4			.631		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization<sup>a</sup>

a: Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

After all, for fourth stage of the research; total variance explained is 61.321% as seen in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Total Variance Explained

Components	Total	Factor Loads	
		% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.737	23.358	23.358
2	2.462	15.390	38.749
3	1.489	9.306	48.055
4	1.115	6.970	55.026
5	1.007	6.296	<b>61.321</b>

In the table above, the most variance explaining factor is S by 23.3%. Then O follows it by 15.39% and W follows by 9.31%. The least important in terms of variance explaining is BET by 6.97% and CET with 6.296%.

At the final stage of the study, normalization process is required to clarify the importance degrees of self SWOT components on career planning process. In doing this, each factor load is divided into the total factor load which is also the total variance explained by five components. Thus we have the next importance levels as following formula and seen in Table 7:

$$\text{New Load} = \frac{\text{Factor Load}}{\text{Total Variance Explained}}$$

**Table 7.** New Loads of Factors

Components	Codes	New Loads
Component 1	S	38.1%
Component 2	O	25.1%
Component 3	W	15.2%
Component 4	BET	11.35%
Component 5	CET	10.25%

#### 4. Conclusion

This research is studied to clarify how important each self-SWOT component is on individual career planning process. Results show that the most determining factor is the person's relying on his strengths in career planning. Self-SWOT analysis explained career planning with a variance of 61%. 39% of variance that is not explained is constituted by destiny, chance; references and nepotism of those are factors relatively far from science.

It is obvious that it is not enough that a person should only know himself but also the opportunities and threats around to make the employee-profession match more effective just as not to burden all the works to the human resources management. The proofs are the unemployment rates for young people aged 15-24 as 25% (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2017), other employee satisfaction questionnaires, overall society happiness surveys and etc. People



have to give up thinking that creating career is not as easy as just by considering their strong sides and talents. They should be aware of being in competition as the organizations in real life. In our country in which basic sciences such as biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics would disappear slowly day by day (medium.com, 2017) that does not help people earn money in both short term easily and “practically”, students are grown up in a culture and educational system that is far from thinking and researching (Karasar, 2013: 51; Turgut, Öztürk, Ercan ve Bozkurt, 2014: 110). They experience what they see around as earning money is much easier with just simple human relations. This situation drives them to choose to be educated in departments as administrative sciences as our sample is chosen from. In this concept, while it is not enough to see their strong sides only, but also perceiving the environment as they wish, students would miss the chance to see the long term and serious threat that can occur both in applying for a university and looking for a job after graduation as majority think in same way.

In our country, unfortunately, the education given to students until they are grown up is not oriented at professional life (Kösterelioğlu ve Bayar, 2014: 185). The interesting side is that the information about professional life is given them at when they are 18 with a little brochure and asked for them to make a department choice for their career path regardless of the fact that they do not know anything about it. Another side of the situation is, after graduating from departments as administrative sciences, supply of job requires much more selective workforce than past (Arık and Seyhan, 2016: 2221) and is not sufficient for the workforce demand (aksam.com.tr, 2014; isinolsa.com, 2017; milliyet.com.tr, 2017; mymemur.com, 2017) which results in increasing unemployment rates (Turkish Statistics Institute, 2018). On the other hand, after at least a 4 year education life time, just as not to be unemployed, students sometimes have to apply for a job and start having a career life which is not related to their departments (memurlar.net, 2005; egitimajansi.com, 2016).

Regarding all these truths; the education system, including the universities based on theoretical learning method (Başdemir, 2012: 44); in our country in which the education system is required to be revised urgently is the external parameter of our study. The scope, also the variable, of this study comprises that when a student makes a career planning, he should not only limit himself with his internal world, but also watches out the external world with a broad vision and carefully. He should not forget that opportunities and threats are as important as realizing what he can do and cannot do. In doing all this self-SWOT analysis, the most important issue is he should be objective (Addams and Allred, 2013: 46). A person who is proud of his strengths only and ignores his weaknesses would cause him make a big

mistake. This situation is just like “a chain is as strong as its weakest ring” condition. Furthermore, a person who uses his objectiveness by opening his eyes just for favors around will be disposed of threats that he has ignored so far.

This study has some limitations. First of all, the research is applied with only one department of a state university. Due to 5.2% ratio of employed students, results of analysis lead to some difficulties in regard of career development issues. Secondly, the main assumption of this study is that every adult person should be aware of him/herself and the environment. That is why being aware and non-awareness could create some differences in results. Thus awareness should be measured by another career planning survey. Thirdly, in this research career planning is meant as a person’s own responsibility. The other factor determining a person’s career is the other side of the medallion which is the organization’s responsibility called as career management.

For further researches, by developing a scale, there shall be comparative analyses among private and state universities’ students.

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