

## EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS (THE CASE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES and PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES)♦

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### ABSTRACT

*The number of enterprises and institutions that recognize the importance of public relations are increasing and the standards of the public relations agencies that are serving to these enterprises and institutions are better of in the Turkish environment which is trying to keep pace with globalization. The existence of some agencies that trace the developments in the world and achieve successful projects is observed in Turkey.*

*However, most of the undergraduate students are facing problems relating to the employment opportunities caused by the lower development level of the sector and high rates of employment from the sectors out of public relations.*

*This study aims to find and compare the expectations and apprehensions of public university and private university undergraduate students studying at the faculty of communication upon their graduation.*

*This research is managed at the Communication Faculties of Selcuk University and Baskent University and there are 100 respondents that are still studying at the faculties from each University.*

*SPSS Windows is used to analyze the gained data from the research.*

**Keywords:** *Public relations, Public relations education, Public Universities, Private Universities, Employment.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Undoubtedly there are a lot of reasons why the public relations has been an overemphasized phenomenon after the first quarter of the twentieth century, especially 1950s. The rapid development in information exchange and sudden change in communication technology are the leading reasons. Continuous information exchange among the countries, organizations and groups in which mass medium is widespread, has led the sense of social responsibility to strengthen and opportunities of interaction to increase. The fact that the managers are increasingly more sensitive to their environment has made necessary to give more importance to the justice and sincerity in communication and to place the public benefit to forefront.

That the public relations is gradually more demanded as a “profession” as a result of its ever increasing importance has created need for both an intensive research and legal regulations related to this department. At this point, the public relations education is an important process of change and development as it is innovational and essential.

The product of information age, in other words the era of communication, and ever becoming widespread in all countries, the public relations has followed a historical process of development to arrive today and turned into awareness management industry by big budgets.

So called as “the child of the twentieth century”, the public relations has led to the controversies whether it is an art or science just as in other social sciences. In fact, it is defined as the oldest of the arts and the newest of the sciences.

In the research, it will be briefly included the public relations in Türkiye and following mentioned about the implementation of the public relations education in the world. Then the results of survey applied on the students of Selçuk University and Başkent University Communication Faculty will be included, the findings of survey data will be presented and lastly the research will be concluded.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Whether the public relations is accepted by its place in marketing communication or in management function, the common point is its proximity to the target audience and the continuousness of communication it has established. In behalf of management, the public relations has to meet the needs of target audience changed with the rapid change and development on technological and social fields. Now then, public relations is a method of strategic importance which helps individuals and institutions to reach the objectives, and is carried by the target audience whose order of importance

differing in accordance with the structure of the institution such as sometimes consumer, sometimes distributor and workers. (Peltekoğlu, 2001: 6).

Public relations serves an important function in terms of adopting the policy followed by the management of the individual and intuitions to the public, providing support and safety of the public, effectively and continually announcement of studies carried or planned to be carried by the management to the public, creating a positive atmosphere to the management and so to the institution. Moreover, public relations has a particular importance in terms of carrying out the function of providing cooperation with the public at what the society thinks about the institution, what the target audience expects and wants from the intuition (Altıntaş, 2005: 52).

One of the other conditions providing the public relations to gain importance is that there is a tendency to the necessity of cognition, consciousness and behavior shaping and routing in the management mentality of the public and private sector. And this is supported by the effort of rising the profit and maximizing the fertility and also increases the necessity of orientation, formation, reformation and orientation of the human psychology. So, enterprises for development and implementation of communication strategies have increased, too. However, the training of the managers, institutions and organizations inside and outside the public relations activities have started to gain importance. (Erdogan, 2006: 173).

The public relations is a planned and constant effort to establish and maintain the good faith and mutual understanding between an organization and the target audience. (Jefkins, 1995: 7)

That the term “social benefit” has gradually gained importance in making strategic decision on managements has led the place and importance of public relations departments in the institution and especially on the board of management to increase. The communication ability of the managements with internal and external target audiences in access to the target has an important role. The communication is the most efficient mean. In this regard, the public relations taking the task of communication and development this communication constantly has an important role for the managements. (Sabuncuoğlu, 2004:5-6).

Among the other tasks of the public relations on behalf of the organization, there are some tasks such as to make a positive image interorganizational, to build good relationships with the media and to plan the budget of their own programmers. Including the above mentioned, the general aims of the public relations are as follows (Altıntaş, 2005: 43-44):

- To introduce the institution,

- To mediate to create a strong communication between the public and institution
- To be in touch with media (Press and TV)
- To strengthen the corporate image
- To strategies for communication
- To keep open the communication channels in-house in order to get personnel have knowledge about the plans and policies of the institution.
- To establish a relation between the institution and the target audience with methods such as press releases, documentations, exhibitions, fairs, mailings and so on.
- To establish close relationships with the customers, institutions, press and opinion leaders
- To fit the commercial and corporate identity of the institution
- To illuminate all the public having direct or indirect communication with institution by transmitting necessary information on the institution and its policies.
- To make a positive approach to the management
- To ensure convenience on the works of the public related to the management
- To ask advice of the public for the right decisions
- To ensure the public to obey the rules and regulations and illuminate them on them
- To move with the public and provide rapid and easy service
- To ensure the fulfillment of social responsibility the institution by carrying out activities for the benefit of both private and public, and so to make a strong image.

## **THE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROBLEM OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

When looking at the distribution of department quotas in Turkey according to the ownership structure, there is a rate of 29.26 percent (755) quota. However, there is a rate of 45.99 percent (1066 people) for private universities. While the

state universities have 2,33 percent of quota (60 people) for other departments, the state universities have 26,66 percent of quota (618 people).

In our day, a large part of the regular training programmers in the field of public relations has fallen behind the procedural training in the traditional fields such as medicine and law which reached the level for many years ago. This is because the information necessary for the profession of public relations is on more different fields other than other fields and the necessity of successful public relations practitioners having a broad knowledge about these different fields. This necessity makes the studies of education. (Erendağ, 2008: 27).

To be successful in the field of public relations which necessitate a wide range of knowledge and skill, it is a must to have the management, organizational skills, and honesty and above all to have a strong personality and leadership qualities as well as having information about communication methods. (Peltekoğlu, 1998: 99).

That the fact that the public relations gradually develops its strategic identity and so there is a need for the qualified staff growing in this field has raised the level of the education of public relations. To carry out the strategic function of this management function, there will be a need for the staff with skill and education level to perform this task. (Asna, 1997: 256-258)

Extracurricular activities, work-professional associations, student-run agencies, communication with close profession groups, public relations career days on campus, guest speakers, non-governmental organizations projects, competitions such as the development of their professional skills following their training will be important factors on the development of their professional skills. (Erendağ, 2008: 29).

One of the important problems of public relations training courses is to provide the balance of theoretical and practical application in graduate-level education. The researches show that the theoretical courses are more dominant than the practices in public relations programs. This is one of the leading issues which the students complain (Cöllü and Selvi, 2010:629)

Public relations problems related to education are found not only in Turkey but also in other countries too. Apart from the education of public relations, the debate on even the definition of the public relations has lasted. Public relations has an interdisciplinary structure and this results in not only difficulties of its position but also prevents the determination of an effective curriculum.

In one study, the number of communication faculty graduates is the average one third of total employment ratio. (Gurel, 2005: 359)

In the same research, as response to the question of “Do you have any privilege or priority for the communication faculty graduates”, 50% of them are positive,

50% of them are negative. It is also added that the ones who say that “I only prefer the communication faculty graduates” agree that the ones having taken the education of economics, psychology, and sociology can accommodate themselves to the communication sector more easily. (Gurel, 2005: 362)

For these reasons, the public relations graduates face some problems on employment as both the importance of the public relations is not felt enough and the graduates from other departments are rival to the graduates from the public relations.

Having a job has not only economic consequences. Craft knowledge and professional experience facilitate the transitions of people to higher status as well as bringing prestige to them. Prestigiousness in social life is an important factor raising the prestige. (Sumak and Cöllü, 2011: 44)

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### ***Methods and Techniques***

This study states that the views of the public relations students on finding a job after graduation. During the study, firstly literature review is examined with the theoretical background and then the questionnaire form is conducted to the students of Selcuk University Faculty of Communication and Public Relations and Publicity Department, Baskent University Faculty of Communication, Public Relations and Publicity Department.

### ***Data Collection***

Primarily a theoretical research has been conducted. The field study is done in the second part and within this scope the results of survey applied on the students of Selcuk University Faculty of Communication and Public Relations and Publicity Department, Baskent University Faculty of Communication, Public Relations and Publicity Department.

### ***Sample Selection and Implementation***

These survey data are obtained from the application performed on the students of Selcuk University Faculty of Communication and Public Relations and Publicity Department. These two universities are selected as samples by taking into consideration that the former is a state university and the latter is a private university and it is also tried to present the educational status of the both private and state university students. 200 students were surveyed with the method of face to face in November, 2008.

A total of 22 questions were asked in the research and while the first ones were about the education of public relations, the last questions were intended to detect the social-demographic qualities of the surveyors. The questionnaire was included the closed end questions. Thought as appropriate to the nature of the equal interval scale, 5- Likert type scale was used for some questions in the research.

<b>1. Students' opinions on finding applications in the sector outside of schools of education;</b>					
	<b>1</b> <i>Aways</i>	<b>2</b> <i>Generally</i>	<b>3</b> <i>Little</i>	<b>4</b> <i>Slightly</i>	<b>5</b> <i>Never</i>
<b>SELÇUK ÜNİV.</b>	%0	%22	%38	%22	%18
<b>BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%0	%18	%50	%12	%20
<b>SÜ+BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%0	%20	%44	%17	%19

When asked to the surveyors participated in the research whether they find any field of application except for their training at school, 22% of the Selcuk University Faculty of Communication, Public relations and Publicity Department students have stated that they can generally find the fields of application in other sectors, 38% of them have stated that they can find several fields of application in other sectors, 22% of them have stated that they can find few fields of application in other sectors and the remaining percent, 18% have said that they cannot find any fields of application.

The results show that the most of the students from both universities cannot find fields of application in other sectors. To fill this deficiency, the faculties can cooperate with the private sector so that the students can practice.

<b>2. . The opinions of students on finding job in the field of public relations after graduating;</b>					
	<b>1</b> <b>Certainly yes</b>	<b>2</b> <b>no</b>	<b>3</b> <b>no</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Certainly no</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Neutral</b>
<b>SELÇUK ÜNİV.</b>	%12	%38	%16	%0	%34
<b>BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%20	%42	%7	%8	%23
<b>SÜ+BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%16	%40	%11,5	%4	%28,5

The surveyors participated in the research were asked their views on finding job in the field of public relations after graduating. 12% of the Selcuk University Faculty of Communication Public Relations and Publicity Department students have checked the “certainly yes”, 38% have checked “yes”, 16% have checked

“no” and 34% have checked “neutral”. 20% of Baskent University Faculty of Communication Public Relations and Publicity Department students participated in the research have checked “certainly yes”, 42% have checked “yes”, 7% have checked “no”, 8% have checked “certainly no” and 23% have checked “neutral”.

In conclusion, a 50% rate of students participating in the training of research from the University of Selcuk, and then finding a job in public relations related to the positive opinions, while this proportion was 62% for Başkent University. Find jobs for people having a negative opinion of the university are evaluated every two rates is very close to each other seen. That title must be specified in the employment rates of university students both in and above 50% although the rate of those undecided on this issue draws attention to the size.

When the results are evaluated, 50% of Selçuk University students have expressed positive opinion on finding job after the graduation while 62% of Baskent University students have positive opinion. When the rate of the ones who have negative view on finding job, it is seen that the rates of both universities are too close to each other. It also should be stated that although the rates of both universities on finding job is over 50%, the high rate of neutral ones is remarkable.

<b>3. The views of students related to their negative opinions on finding job;</b>					
	<b>1</b> <i>I dont think ı have adequate hands-on training</i>	<b>2</b> <i>I am insufficient on education developing creative thinking</i>	<b>3</b> <i>I am insufficient on personal education</i>	<b>4</b> <i>The education criteria on employment is not taken into consideration</i>	<b>5</b> <i>Other</i>
<b>SELÇUK ÜNİV.</b>	%32	%6	%10	%50	%2
<b>BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%19	%17	%14	%33	%17
<b>SÜ+BAŞKE NT ÜNİV.</b>	%25,5	%11,5	%12	%41,5	%9,5

The surveyors participated in the research were asked their negative ideas on finding job. 32% of Selcuk University Faculty of Communication, Public relations and Publicity Department students have stated that they do not think that they have adequate hands on training, 6% of them have stated that they are insufficient on education developing creative thinking, 10% have stated that they are insufficient on personal education, 50% have stated that the education criteria on employment is not taken into consideration. The remaining 2% have

expressed different opinions expressed. The same question is answered by students of University of Baskent. 17% of them have stated that they are insufficient on education developing creative thinking, 14% have stated that they are insufficient on personal education, 33% have stated that the education criteria on employment is not taken into consideration.

Looking at the results in a comparative way, for the half of the students from Selcuk University, the reason of their negative views on finding job is that the education criteria on employment is not taken into consideration while nearly other part (32%) have given the reason that they have not adequate hands on training. On the other hand, 33% of Başkent University students have expressed that the sector have not taken the education into consideration while other choices are close to each other for the remaining part

<b>4.Öğrencilerin Sektörde Uygulama imkânı bulamamalarının nedenleri ile ilgili görüşleri;</b>			
	<b>SELÇUK ÜNİV.</b>	<b>BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	<b>SÜ+BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>
<i>1 Sektör öncülerinin bu alanda eğitimli personele ihtiyaç duymaması</i>	%6	%0	%3
<i>2 Okul yönetiminin yönlendirici olmaması</i>	%34	%15	%24,5
<i>3. Okuldaki dersler nedeniyle zaman yetersizliği</i>	%2	%12	%7
<i>4. Okul ile sektör arasında iletişim kopukluğu ve işbirliğinin olmaması</i>	%30	%52	%41
<i>5. Ekonomik ve sosyal çevre açısından Konya ili/Ankara ilinin yetersizliği</i>	%8	%0	%4
<i>6 Profesyonel kurum ve kuruluşların eksiliği</i>	%6	%12	%9
<i>7. Diğer</i>	%4	%9	%6,5

When the results are evaluated, it is remarkable that for most of the students from both universities, the reason that they cannot find field of application in sector is the lack of communication between the school and the sector.

<b>5. Öğrencilere eğitimini almakta oldukları halkla ilişkiler mesleğinin zayıf yönleri ile ilgili görüşleri;</b>					
	<i>1 Sektörel ilgisizlik</i>	<i>2 Toplumsal açıdan önemsenme eksikliği</i>	<i>3 Örgütlenme eksikliği</i>	<i>4 Yasal düzenlemelerin olmaması</i>	<i>5 Diğer</i>
<b>SELÇUK ÜNİV.</b>	%34	%36	%6	%20	%4
<b>BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%37	%49	%13	%1	%0
<b>SÜ+BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%35,5	%42,5	%9,5	%10,5	%2

The surveyors participated in the research were asked about their views on weak aspects of the profession of public relations. 34% of Selcuk University Faculty of Communication Public Relations and Publicity students have emphasized the sectoral indifference, 36% have emphasized the lack of being considered important in the eye of public, 6% have emphasized lack of organization, and 20% have emphasized lack of legal regulation. And the remaining 4% have offered different suggestions for the weak aspects of the public relations. The same question was answered by students from Baskent University Faculty of Communication Public Relations and Rublicity and the results were 37% sectoral indifference, 49% lack of lack of being considered important in the eye of public, 13% lack of organization and 1% lack of legal regulation.

<b>6. Aylık harcamanız ne kadar? (TL)</b>					
	<b>1 100-200</b>	<b>2 201-300</b>	<b>3 301-400</b>	<b>4 401-500</b>	<b>5 501-+</b>
<b>SELÇUK ÜNİV.</b>	%14	%18	%18	%28	%22
<b>BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%10	%10	%16	%17	%47
<b>SÜ+BAŞKENT ÜNİV.</b>	%25,5	%14	%17	%22,5	%34,5

The surveyors participated in the study were asked about their monthly expense, the results were: 25.5% of the students' monthly expense is between 100-200 TL, the monthly expense of 14% of them is between 201-300 TL, 22.5% of them is between 401-500 TL and the remaining's monthly expense is 500 TL and over in Selcuk University. The most students from Baskent University have expressed that their monthly expense is 500 TL and over. It can be concluded from these results that while Selcuk University Faculty of Communication has students from every segment of society whose economic status is different, the students with much better economic status prefer Baskent University Faculty of Communication.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Researches show that the students have not enough information in advance about the university department which they have chosen. Therefore, some students including public relations students fail at school life and later business life. To avoid this, the students should be informed pre-university and guided considering their abilities and skills.

Determining the curriculum of the public relations, it should be taken into consideration the necessities of the business life and the applied courses should be concentrated on.

Besides the theoretical and practical training, the students will find opportunities to work together with public relations associations, to open up the sector by establishing agencies, contact with professional groups and civil society organizations, to invite successful speakers in their profession on career days, speakers have been successful in calling in the profession in the fields of activities such as participation in competitions will have the opportunity to develop their professional skills.

It can be concluded that a remarkable part of students from both universities cannot find any field of application in sector. The practices should be provided for students in their school life by cooperating with the business life. Internship periods should be provided so that the students can see the business life.

On finding job related to the public relations, the students of Baskent University Faculty of Communication have more positive views than the students of Selcuk University have. This can be explained with the fact that the public relations sector is more developed in Ankara where Baskent University Faculty of Communication is situated. That the economic situations of Baskent University students, a private university, are much better than Selcuk University Students' is assumed as another reason.

For the most of the students from both universities participated in the research, the weak aspects of public relations profession are lack of being considered important in the eye of public and the sectoral indifference. The universities and public relations firms should study together to resolve this problem.

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