

A Research About Determining the Importance of Word of Mouth Marketing For Choosing Pre-School Education Institution in Trakya

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Abstract

In today's technology, consumers can easily obtain all kinds of information. In addition; the consumer who is directly exposed to many desired or undesired messages has difficulty in making a decision in the purchasing process. While consumers try to choose the best one for themselves among many alternatives, marketers who try to respond to variable needs and desires of consumers are also trying to develop new strategies. One of them is to use word-of-mouth marketing method in a positive way.

Since the choice of pre-school education institution has an important place in the service sector, word-of-mouth marketing should be applied properly.

The aim of this study is to determine the factors affecting word of mouth communication variables in the purchasing decision of pre-school education institutions.

For this study; it is aimed to collect data from people in Trakya district. Target audience can be parents or family elders and relatives who are providing financial support have chosen or will choose a pre-school education institution soon for at least 1 child.

After the data collection; 225 surveys were synthesized in the SPSS program.

As a result of the research; it has been determined that most of the consumers get advice when purchasing pre-school education services and the people they get advice from are the people in their immediate surroundings such as colleagues/friends and people who are experts about education. Besides; pre-school education employees and the internet are also effective sources of information.

In conclusion; it has been seen in the research results that some demographic variables affect WOMC and WOMC is effective in the purchasing process of pre-school education institution.

Keywords: Advice; consumer decision process; marketing communication; pre-school education institution; word of mouth communication; word of mouth marketing

INTRODUCTION

With the proliferation of alternatives in the consumption sector, competition between brands has increased. At the same time, there has been an environment where consumers have to do more research to find the right one among these alternatives.

There are too many companies in the market that use marketing, sales and public relations channels very well. Besides, there are preferred goods or service brands although they don't use advertising channels very often. They actually use a very frequently used distribution channel thanks to their existing consumers. This is where the concept of word-of-mouth communication and marketing comes into play, as it is known, advice.

In today's intense competitive environment, businesses that want to gain an advantage against their competitors have to choose the most effective communication channel(s) for the messages they will send to target consumers and use this communication channel(s) correctly. Today, many businesses realize the power of word-of-mouth communication created by neighbors, friends, family members and experts (Avçılar, 2010, s. 334-347).

There are various studies on the effect of WOMM in the literature. Perceived service quality and customer satisfaction are often highly influential on referral behavior (Öz & Uyar, 2014, s. 123-132).

The general aim of this research is to determine the role of WOMM on the decisions of people who have chosen a pre-school education institution or will do in the near future.

It is aimed to collect information within the scope of the research about the general profile of the people who have purchased or plan to purchase pre-school education service, the information sources consulted, giving and receiving advice habits, the bond between the source and the receiver, the degree of closeness, the receiver's and source's expertise degree, the perceived risk level of the receiver, source's opinion leadership and active search for ideas. It is also predicted that the role of WOMM in the selection of pre-school education institutions may differ according to socio-demographic characteristics.

Pre-school education services have some unique aspects like many other services. Although the primary consumer of this service seems to be children, "the decision maker" of the educational institution is the parent of the children. These decision makers are mostly parents, but they can sometimes be a relative or close family friends who supports the family financially and morally.

Decision makers are also the common consumer of this service. To explain; many people who affect the purchasing decision of some products do not participate the consumption process, but families or decision makers are heavily involved in service consumption in the selection of pre-school education institutions. The decision makers are more affected by the results of their choices than the children because the evaluation of issues such as service content, quality and satisfaction belong to them (Polat & Çelmeli, 2015, pp. 145-148). One of the most important duties of the families is choosing a qualified pre-school education institution for their children. Families' knowledge about pre-school education and the people they take advice from affect the choice of pre-school education institution and their expectations from it (Koç, 1996, p. 12). In a study on "preference factors" on parents who choose pre-school education institutions, it has been determined that there are significant differences in school preferences of consumers according to school, education, personal and family factors (Açıklalın, 1989, pp. 85-91).

Another dimension of the issue is the gap in the Turkish literature about which factors consumers consider when choosing pre-school education institutions. In the marketing literature, there have been many studies about the consumer' purchasing process of many products such as; FMCG, mobile phone, textile and etc., but there is not enough research from a marketing point of view regarding pre-school education institution preferences (Polat & Külter, 2007, pp. 109-126). Studies conducted to determine the factors affecting the choice of pre-school education institution have mostly been in the field of "educational discipline". Studies directly on the subject are limited. In a study conducted on parents who have made or will make the decision of a pre-school education institution in order to determine the factors affecting the choice of institution, it was observed that they took advice and directed their choices accordingly at a high rate (Koç, 1996, p. 12). It is understood that not only the factors related to the school itself, but also the individuals within and outside the family are more effective in choosing the institution. As with many other commercial products, peer-friend advice is more significant in the choice of educational services, on the other hand, it has been seen that the advertising and promotion activities of the institutions are not enough to affect consumers. In addition, even in the studies on the factors affecting the school preferences of the parents and the advertising strategies of private schools, it was determined that the most frequently used information source by the parents was their environment, the families of other students studying at the school and the staff working in the institution. Therefore, it is seen that the educational understanding of the school and references are more effective in the school preference of the parents (Tokuç, 2007, p. 56). In a study on "preference factors" on parents'

choice of pre-school education institutions, it has been determined that there are differences between the parents' education, age, income and gender (Açıklan, 1989, pp. 85-91).

In many studies in the literature, WOMM has been handled with different aspects, and research has been carried out about the effect of WOMM generally on health services and technology products. As a result of the literature review, it has been determined that there aren't many large-scale studies on this subject in our country. Also, there are not many books.

In order to fill this deficiency; it should be asked that how different variables of WOMM can affect the decision of choosing pre-school education institution of participants.

For this reason, the dimensions such as expertise, idea seeking, opinion leadership, perceived risk and advice which are important in determining the role of WOMM will be discussed according to the demographic characteristics of the participants in pre-school education sector.

As a result of the research; it has been determined that most of the consumers get advice when purchasing pre-school education services and the people they get advice from are the people in their immediate surroundings such as colleagues/friends and people who are experts about education. Besides; pre-school education employees and the internet are also effective sources of information. In terms of the role of WOMC during the selection of pre-school education institution, it is seen that the expertise variable differed according to education groups. Perceived risk differed according to gender and income level. It was concluded that the recommendation (advice) didn't make difference according to any demographic features, while the idea seeking differs according to gender and age groups. It was observed that opinion leadership didn't differ in any of the demographic groups.

In this research, it is foreseen that this study will contribute to the literature.

The main research question of this research is that which WOMC variables (expertise, idea seeking, opinion leadership, perceived risk and advice) according to demographic characteristics can be effective in the decision process of pre-school education institution?

This study was conducted by the nature of quantitative research methods. In terms of WOMC variables (advice, expertise, opinion leadership, idea seeking, perceived risk) on the choice of pre-school education institution was examined and demographic characteristics of the survey participants.

The research model was created as in Figure 1.

As it can be seen in Figure 1, in the first part of the model, socio-demographic characteristics that gender, age, educational status and income level were considered. In the second part, within the scope of WOMC variables; people's opinions were examined according to expertise, seeking advice, opinion leadership, perceived risk, and advice while they are taking some advice about pre-school education institution service. According to Figure 1, research hypotheses are identified.

H1: The opinions of the participants in the research differ according to the gender.

H1a: The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to the gender.

H1b: The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to the gender.

H1c: The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to the gender.

H1d: The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to the gender.

H1e: The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to the gender.

H2: The opinions of the participants in the research differ according to the age.

H2a: The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to the age.

H2b: The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to the age.

H2c: The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to the age.

H2d: The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to the age.

H2e: The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to the age.

H3: The opinions of the participants in the research differ according to the education level.

H3a: The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to the education level.

H3b: The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to the education level.

H3c: The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to the education level.

H3d: The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to the education level.

H3e: The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to the education level.

H4: The opinions of the participants in the research differ according to their income level.

H4a: The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to their income level.

H4b: The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to their income level.

H4c: The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to their income level.

H4d: The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to their income level.

H4e: The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to their income level.

RESULTS

This study focuses on the pre-school education institution sector, was conducted among the people who have made or will make decision about pre-school education institution of children. Decision makers of pre-school education service can be the families of the child, but also family elders or relatives who provide financial support in this decision. Sample data for this study were obtained from people living in Trakya. 225 surveys could be analyzed via SPSS program.

The demographic results of the survey are listed below:

1. Demographic Results Of The Survey

- a. 72% of the participants for 1 child, 21.3% of them for 2 children, 4% of them for 3 children, 1.3% of them for 7 children, 0.9% of them for 4 children, 0.6% of them for 6 children will make or have made decision about pre-school institution in the survey as shown in Table 1.
- b. According to the results, 10,2% participants are male and 89,8% of them are female as shown in Table 2.
- c. The numbers show that 17,8% of the participants at age between 20 and 30, 64,4% of people are at age between 31 and 40, 12,9% of people are at age between 41 and 50. The age between 51 and over is at the minimum percentage with 7,9% as shown in Table 3.
- d. According to the results, 86,2% of the participants graduated from bachelor or above degrees, 8,9% of them graduated from high school and 4,9% of them graduated from pre-high school as shown in Table 4.
- e. According to monthly income results, 45,8% of participants have income between 6.501 TL and 15.500 TL, 36% of them have between 2.501 TL and 6.500 TL, 13,3% have 15.500 TL and above, 4,9% have 2.500 TL and below as shown in Table 5.

The advice taking and giving habit results of the survey are listed below:

2. Taking And Giving Advice Habit Results Of The Research

- a) 50.7% of the participants definitely get advice before purchasing a pre-school service. 32.4% of parents take advice if it is important for their children. 10.7% of the participants want to get advice when they need more information about the institutions. 5.8% take advice when they are undecided among the available pre-school services. The rate of those who don't want to get advice is seen as only 0.4% as shown in Table 6.
- b) According to results, 84.9% of the survey participants stated that they were given advice when choosing an institution that provides pre-school education. 10.2% of total participants stated that they didn't get any advice. The rate of participants who couldn't remember whether they received advice or not is 4.9% as shown in Table 7.
- c) When participants were asked about people whose advice they most benefited from, they gave the answer of "friends or colleagues" with 67.1%, educators with 52%, pre-school education institution employees with 42.2%, the internet with 41.8%, families and relatives with 24.4%, their neighbors with 10.7% and internet celebrities with 3.1% as shown in Table 8.
- d) On the results, 59.6% of the participants consider themselves as a researcher, 31.6% of the participants think that they are conscious, 8% of people think they are undecided, 0.9% of the participants see themselves as a free-rider when they receive advice while choosing pre-school education services as shown in Table 9.
- e) As it shown in Table 10, 89.3% of people think that good or bad experiences can be shared, and advice is given for guidance, 58.7% of people think that the risks that may be encountered can be reduced through advice, 51.1% of the participants are willing to help when giving advice, 27.1% of people think that the advice is necessary in order to minimize the time to be spent while doing the preliminary research and 12% of people consider giving advice as a social responsibility.

- f) As it can be seen in Table 11, when the 78.7% of people tend to give advice, but 15.1% of people say that they aren't giving advice, 6.2% of the participants don't remember whether they give advice or not.

3. Hypotheses Testing and Variance Test Results Of The Research

At first, it was decided that which test would be applied to the WOMC and demographic variables. The sample is quite adequate for all variables according to KMO and Barlett's tests. WOMC variables distributed abnormally except the expertise variable. After these normality and KMO and Barlett's tests, applied variance tests can be seen in Table 12.

In the following parts of the research, T-test for parametric variables (normal distribution) consisting of two subgroups and one-way ANOVA analysis was used for more than two subgroups. For non-parametric variables (abnormal distribution), Mann-Whitney U test was applied for the variables consisting of two subgroups, and Kruskal Wallis was applied for more than two subgroups. When testing hypotheses, the p value is usually checked in these tests. If the p value is less than 0.05, there is a difference between the factors in the hypothesis. But if the value is greater than 0.05; no difference can be found between the factors and the hypothesis cannot be confirmed. (Cevahir, 2020, p. 70).

- a. **For H1a sub-hypothesis**, as can be seen on the Table 13, p value is greater than 0,05. There is no difference between participants' decisions about pre-school education institution according to their gender about the expertise. The H1a has been rejected.
- b. **For H1b sub-hypothesis**, p value shows that there is difference between participants' decisions about pre-school education institution according to their gender about the idea seeking. In conclusion, H1b hypothesis has been accepted. This difference is towards female participants as shown in Table 14.
- c. **For H1c sub-hypothesis**, p value is more than 0,05 as it shown in Table 15. There is no difference about opinion leadership between the gender subgroups on the pre-school education institution decisions. H1c has been rejected.

- d. **For H1d sub-hypothesis**, as we can see that in Table 16, the decisions of the male and female participants showed differences about the perceived risk. H1d hypothesis has been accepted towards female participants.
- e. **For H1e sub-hypothesis**, as it shown in Table 17, we can see that there is no difference between gender groups because p value is more than 0,05. So, we have rejected H1e hypothesis.
- f. **For H2a sub-hypothesis**, p value says that there is no difference among the age categories for expertise variable. H2a has been rejected as it shown in Table 18.
- g. **For H2b sub-hypothesis**, as it shown in Table 19, p value is 0,029 and smaller than 0,05, so there is a difference among the age groups for idea seeking. H2b hypothesis has been valid towards the age group between 20 and 30.
- h. **For H2c sub-hypothesis**, there is no difference between age groups about the opinion leadership, because the p value is more than 0,05 as shown in Table 20. H2c has been rejected.
- i. **For H2d sub-hypothesis**, p value is more than 0,05, for this reason, there is no difference among the age groups about the perceived risk when the participants make the pre-school education institution decision as shown in Table 21. H2d has been rejected.
- j. **For H2e sub-hypothesis**, test findings show that, there is no difference about advice between the age groups as shown in Table 22. H2e has been rejected.
- k. **For H3a sub-hypothesis**, t results of the expertise variable had showed that there are differences between the education level groups as shown in Table 23. H3a has been accepted. This difference is derived from bachelor and above degrees.

- l. For H3b sub-hypothesis**, there is no difference about idea seeking for pre-school education institution among the education level of participants as shown in Table 24. So; H3b has been rejected.
- m. For H3c sub-hypothesis**, as we can see on the Table 25, there is no difference about affecting from opinion leadership variable between the education stages of participants. H3c has been rejected.
- n. For H3d sub-hypothesis**, as we can see on Table 26, the perceived risk when the participants try to find the best pre-school education institution doesn't show significant difference according to the education level of the people. H3d has been rejected.
- o. For H3e sub-hypothesis**, as we can see on Table 27, there is no difference among the education groups. Because the p-value is more than 0,05, so H3e has been declined.
- p. For H4a sub-hypothesis**, there is no important difference between the opinions of participants have different income level about the expertise of consulted people as shown in Table 28. So; H4a has been rejected.
- q. For H4b sub-hypothesis**, all participants from every income level act the same about idea seeking, there is no difference between the income groups as shown in Table 29. So; H4b has been declined.
- r. For H4c sub-hypothesis**, there is no difference between the income groups. H4c has been rejected as shown in Table 30.
- s. For H4d sub-hypothesis**, the perceived risk factor shows some differences between the income groups. If income level of participants is 2500 TL or below, they feel more risk as shown in Table 31. H4d has been valid.
- t. For H4e sub-hypothesis**, recommendation factor doesn't make significant difference between the income groups as shown in Table 32. So; H4e is rejected.

DISCUSSION

In a study by Silverman, it was emphasized that WOMC is one of the most effective methods that can be used to facilitate the decision and speed up the decision process of potential customers (Silverman , 2001, p. 23). WOMM which has managed to attract the attention of the marketing world in recent years done deliberately by companies. It is a strategy of enabling consumers or independent people to talk about products or services by conveying their knowledge, opinions, expertise or experience outside the company environment (Brown & Reingen, 1987, p. 362).

It is very important for potential consumers to get information about the product or service from the people who don't have a commercial connection with the company or brand. Information transfers of people who have previously experienced a brand's products or services are more reliable according to potential customers' view than company advertisements, promotions and campaigns. When the employees in the marketing department of the companies realized this situation, they started to turn to new strategies against the decision mechanism of potential consumers. In this manner, WOMM strategies in which WOMC namely advice takes place predominantly has become an important method for companies and brands. The reason why today's companies understand the importance of WOMC and WOMM is because they see the strengths of these concepts.

In the research, within the framework of the main audience, the effect of WOMC factors that expertise, idea seeking, opinion leadership, perceived risk and receiving advice on WOMM was evaluated. In addition, the relationship between the demographic characteristics of the receiver (buyer of the service) and the level of exposure was also examined.

Consumers often need advice in the process of purchasing services. At this point, pre-school education service is a sector where the power of advice is intense. Promotion and advertising campaigns constitute a certain part of the expense budgets of pre-school education services because; when the competitive and economic conditions are examined, they have a goal of gaining customers and not losing existing customers. WOMC gives businesses' marketing activities action and realizes to make the advertisement of the business in a very short time. Businesses can use many resources while performing WOMM activities. The sources used can be media tools as well as the people driving the advice (opinion leaders, market worms, reference groups or ordinary people). If these tools are directed effectively, the effectiveness and efficiency of WOMC can be increased (Karaca, 2010, pp. 12-62).

The reasons of the importance of WOMC are that it is found to be more reliable by potential consumers than other marketing methods, the transfer of experience is more, and it is found to be effective in terms of saving time and money. In terms of businesses, it can be preferred because it doesn't cost too much.

Various studies have been conducted in the literature on the effect of WOMM. The studies carried out are generally related to FMCG products and there aren't many studies related to the service sector. There are few studies on the effect of WOMM, especially on the pre-school education sector. In this study, analyzes were conducted to determine the role of WOMM variables according to demographic features (age, gender, income level and education level) in the selection of pre-school education institutions of participants from Trakya region.

First of all, literature research was conducted and WOMC and WOMM concepts were explained in this part of the thesis.

In addition, the data collection method was determined as an online survey and the surveys were conducted online via "Survey monkey". While the questionnaire was sent to the relevant person, information was given about the questionnaire and the thesis. Most consumers need to get the opinions of other people before purchasing a service.

The advice they receive from their inner environment such as family, relatives, friends/colleagues and derivatives are very effective. Before purchasing a service, consumers are willing to seek advice in order to minimize the perceived risk factor. Pre-school education is also a very important type of service for parents or people who decide on educational institutions. Consumers who make or will make this decision for their children or a relative they care for will need the information, experiences or opinions of experienced people related to this service purchased. For this reason, this study was conducted on this segment of the service sector.

The choice of pre-school education institution has a very important place for the guardians of the child who will choose the educational institution. Because pedagogues say that development of children is much more important in the 0-6 age range and also it is right for the child after the age of 3 to go to a pre-school education institution in terms of socialization.

CONCLUSION

After statistical analysis of this thesis, which is related to “Determining the Role of Word-of-Mouth Marketing in Pre-school Education Institution Purchasing Decision”, the following findings emerged.

The research findings start with frequency and descriptive analysis. The majority of the participants are people who have been involved in the selection of one (1) child's pre-school education institution.

It is seen that the female participants are more in the distribution of men and women participating in the research.

Participants are generally between the ages of 31-40. Approximately 90% of these people are graduates from bachelor or higher degrees of institutions. In addition, it is seen that people whose income level is 6.501-15.5000 TL participated in the research.

50.7% of the participants stated that they would definitely get advice before choosing a pre-school education service, and the majority of them stated that they received advice also; there were some studies that the advice is often given when it is not needed. Participants described themselves as conscious and researcher while receiving advice.

The majority of participants think that the cause of giving and taking advice in the decision-making process is the desire to avoid risks and being willingness to help in this process. In addition, many people want to share their good and bad experiences about the service.

Most of the participants stated that they received advice from friends or colleagues and educators at the decision process of purchasing pre-school education services. Besides, pre-school education employees and the internet are also effective sources of information.

Considering the characteristics of the resources; it has been observed that the opinions of knowledgeable and experienced individuals are more important due to the significance of children's education especially. Moreover, it is clearly seen how much we are influenced by the ideas of the people around us during our decision-making process.

In a study on healthcare, it has seen that people rely on the advice of educators, friends, and colleagues on highly sensitive issues like in health sector that cannot be put at risk (Akçin, 2016, pp. 79-82). In a study by Kılıçer (2006), 50% of the participants stated that they were affected

by WOMC. The majority of respondents have requested for advice themselves. 70% stated that they received information from their friends through WOMC and also obtained the result that the expertise level of the source has a significant effect (Kılıçer, 2006, p. 54). According to the results of another study on WOMM; it has been observed that the effect of "power of recommendation" is significant in the potential purchasing decisions of students after positive or negative recommendations from their environment. It has been determined that if the recommendation is positive, the effect of "recommendation request" and "degree of affinity" is important, but if the recommendation is negative, the effect of "brand used", "number of recommendations" and "trust" is significant (Yozgat & Deniz, 2011, pp. 43-63).

For this research, we can say that H1b, H1d, H2b, H3a and H4d hypothesis are accepted at the end of the statistical test. The results of the hypothesis testing are shown on Table 33.

Depending on all hypotheses testing and factor tests performed, analysis results are as follows:

- As a result of the analyzes made in the research, **the perceived risk and idea seeking** dimensions differ according to **the gender**. Gender is effective demographic factor used to measure the impact of WOMM on consumer purchasing behavior. Even though equality between men and women, equal rights and an equal working environment are advocated in today's society, it is seen that women mostly focus on family matters in purchasing activities but men focus on occupational subjects (Rothschild & Stiglitz, 1976, pp. 629-649). While the purchasing behavior of men differs greatly from the women, it has been observed that men and women have different preferences even when purchasing the same product.

Since women are more emotionally minded beings, they are more involved in the purchasing process of sensitive products or services, which must be chosen carefully. Men who stand out with their more practical aspects don't think too much about the purchasing decision. They focus on products that will solve their problem in the shortest time and can benefit from for a long time.

Female participants, who play a greater role in choosing a pre-school education institution, therefore do more research on ideas and think about risk possibilities more. Because this choice carries the possibility of physical or psychological risks coming back to them through their children.

At the purchasing decision stage, while men prefer solution-oriented products in a short time, women get help from experienced people around them to achieve the best results

for them and their children (Özdemir & Tokol, 2008, pp. 57-80). In general, female individuals' tendency of seeking opinions from more people, doing research to eliminate alternatives and talking more on a topic caused a difference in the variable of seeking ideas according to the gender groups. Women always have someone to talk to and share their experiences with. As a matter of fact, one of the most important consequences of these differences for marketing and sales is seen in the fact that female consumers ask for help and accept it (Barletta, 2003, pp. 75-78). Women are more willing to idea seeking than the men. In addition, the perceived risk dimension to vary according to gender, because of the physical, psychological and social risk perceptions of women and men are different from each other. When female individuals seek advice from their environment or people who got the pre-school education service before, they think that they avoid financial and moral risks more than male individuals' thinking. Getting advice from more people means lowering risk for female participants. Due to the perceived risk variable, female individuals use WOMC more. At the end of that, under any circumstances, contacting people who have previously purchased it will save both time and money, and will also provide efficiency by minimizing the risk for anything you want to buy.

- The age distribution of consumers is very important for product or service marketers. The age characteristics should always be taken into consideration in the design, packaging and marketing stages of the product until it reaches the buyer (Durmaz et al., 2011, p. 118).

Consumers tend to purchase with different needs in every period of life. It is obvious that young consumers and older consumers have serious differences in product preferences (Tek, 1999, p. 801).

As a result of the research, it was seen that there was a significant difference between **the age groups** of the participants only in **the idea seeking**. It is seen that the participants in the 20-30 age range need more advice because of their lack of experience and evaluate alternatives more. It is thought that there is a significant difference between the age groups because they are more researcher in terms of their generation. Young and middle-aged consumers are more likely to seek out the opinions of people who have received the service they tend to purchase. Besides, for young and middle-aged consumers who use new technologies intensively, E-WOMM is also daily life routine like WOMM through some comments on internet platforms, blogs, social media and etc. At the same time, their ability to exert more physical and psychological effort than

older age groups are also related to their idea-seeking orientation and their need to eliminate the alternatives. As the age group gets older, the rate of seeking advice decreases, so this can be related to older age groups' expertise level about choosing pre-school education institution.

- When we look at the results of the research by **education groups**, we see that the only significant difference is in the variable of **expertise**. One of the factors affecting the consumer purchasing decision is the level of education. When the education level changes, there is also a difference in the purchasing situation. As the level of education increases, the perception of quality changes and socially responsible and conscious consumers are formed (Sürücü, 1998, p. 19). As the level of education increases, people's attention to the other party's level of expertise increases. Since they are also more involved in the education sector, the expertise of the other party makes a big difference.

It seems that as the level of education decreases, less importance is given to the degree of expertise of the person whose advice is sought. It has been observed that people completed bachelor and above degrees pay more attention to the expertise of the person they receive advice from when choosing a pre-school education institution.

- According to the variance analysis, **the perceived risk** dimension differs between **income groups**. The different perception of financial, sociological, psychological, physical and performance risks in pre-school education services in income groups has caused this dimension to vary. The income level of consumers also directly or indirectly affects their purchasing power. Consumers with high incomes may spend excessively in order to gain social status as well as meeting their basic needs. The person with low income doesn't want to spend any money except their basic needs. People with low income want to minimize the risk of time and money while spending (Cemalcılar, 1998, p. 247). While the consumer puts a product they need the most at the top of the priority list, they place the product with the least need at the bottom. Income status determines the order of necessity of needs. Limited income affects the distribution among products. People with limited income will have a higher risk perception when receiving advice, as they will prioritize this need for pre-school education and adjust their income accordingly. Participants with low levels of income were found to consider these risks more because they are likely to encounter some material or moral damages as a result of their choices. Participants with an income of 2500 TL or less perceived a higher level of risk while they are trying to search the pre-school education institution.

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Tables

Table 1. *Distribution of the participants according to the number of children*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	162	72,0	72,0	72,0
2	48	21,3	21,3	93,3
3	9	4,0	4,0	97,3
4	2	,9	,9	98,2
6	1	,4	,4	98,7
7	3	1,3	1,3	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 2. *Distribution of the participants according to the gender*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent %
Male	23	10,2	10,2	10,2
Female	202	89,8	89,8	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 3. *Distribution of the participants according to the age*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent%
20-30	40	17,8	17,8	17,8
31-40	145	64,4	64,4	82,2
41-50	29	12,9	12,9	95,1
51 and over	11	4,9	4,9	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 4. *Distribution of the participants according to education level*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent%
Pre-high school	11	4,9	4,9	4,9
High school	20	8,9	8,9	13,8
Bachelor and above	194	86,2	86,2	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 5. *Distribution of the participants according to income level*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent%
2500 and below	11	4,9	4,9	4,9
2.501-6.500	81	36,0	36,0	40,9
6.501-15.500	103	45,8	45,8	86,7
15.501 and above	30	13,3	13,3	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 6. *Distribution of participants on whether they want to take advice before choosing a pre-school education institution*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent%
I would definitely take advice.	114	50,7	50,7	50,7
I take advice when need more information.	24	10,7	10,7	61,3
I get advice when I'm undecided.	13	5,8	5,8	67,1
If it is an important educational service for my child, I take advice.	73	32,4	32,4	99,6
I do not take advice.	1	,4	,4	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 7. *Distribution of whether the participants were given advice before choosing the pre-school education institution*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent%
No, they didn't give advice.	23	10,2	10,2	10,2
Yes, they gave advice.	191	84,9	84,9	95,1
I can't remember.	11	4,9	4,9	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 8. *Distribution of the resources that the participants get advice before choosing the pre-school education institution*

	Frequency	Cumulative Percent%
Family and Relatives	55	24,4
Internet	94	41,8
Pre-school education employees	95	42,2
Friends and Colleagues	151	67,1
Neighbors	24	10,7
Influencers(celebrities)	7	3,1
Educators	117	52
Total	543	100,0

Table 9. *Distribution of the participants' attitudes towards getting advice before choosing a pre-school education institution*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent%
Researcher	134	59,6	59,6	59,6
Conscious	71	31,6	31,6	91,1
Indecisive	18	8,0	8,0	99,1
Free-riders (lazy to search)	2	,9	,9	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 10. *Distribution of participants' views on people giving advice to each other before choosing a pre-school education institution*

		Frequency	Cumulative Percent%
	Willingness to help	115	51,1
	Willingness to avoid risks	132	58,7
	Saving time that could be spent on preliminary research	61	27,1
	Sharing and guiding good/bad experiences	201	89,3
	Social responsibility	27	12,0
	Total	536	100,0

Table 11. *Distribution of whether the participants gave advice about any institution providing pre-school education*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent%
No, I did not advise.	34	15,1	15,1	15,1
Yes, I have recommended.	177	78,7	78,7	93,8
I can't remember.	14	6,2	6,2	100,0
Total	225	100,0	100,0	

Table 12. *Table of applied tests to the factors and demographics*

Factors	Gender	Age Education Level Income Level
Expertise	T-test	One-way ANOVA
Idea Seeking	Mann-Whitney U test	Kruskal Wallis
Opinion Leadership	Mann-Whitney U test	Kruskal Wallis
Perceived Risk	Mann-Whitney U test	Kruskal Wallis
Advice	Mann-Whitney U test	Kruskal Wallis

Table 13. *T-test of the expertise according to the gender*

		Mean	t	p	Finding
Gender	Female	1,6422	-1,149	.951	No Difference
	Male	1,4980			

Table 14. *Mann-Whitney U test of the idea seeking according to the gender*

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p	Finding
Gender	Male	23	83,57	1922,00	1646,00	-2,303	.021*	Difference
	Female	202	116,35	23503,00				

Table 15. *Mann-Whitney U test of the opinion leadership according to the gender*

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p	Finding
Gender	Male	23	117,02	2691,50	2230,50	-,315	<u>.752</u>	No Difference
	Female	202	112,54	22733,50				

Table 16. Mann-Whitney U test of the perceived risk according to the gender

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p	Finding
Gender	Male	23	87,17	2005,00	1729,0	-	<u>.044</u> *	Difference
	Female	202	115,94	23420,00	0	2,015		

Table 17. Mann-Whitney U test of the advice according to the gender

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p	Finding
Gender	Male	23	92,11	2118,50	1842,	-1,644	<u>.100</u>	No Difference
	Female	202	115,38	23306,50	500			

Table 18. One-Way ANOVA of the expertise according to the age

		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p	Findings
Age	Between Groups	13,415	,433	,843	<u>.706</u>	No Difference
	Within Groups	99,047	,513			
	Total	112,462				

Table 19. *Kruskal Wallis test of the idea seeking according to age*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Findings
20-30	40	119,58	9,056	3	<u>,029*</u>	Difference
31-40	145	113,50				
41-50	29	105,29				
51 and above	11	102,82				
Total	225					

Table 20. *Kruskal Wallis test of the opinion leadership according to age*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
20-30	40	120,95	1,111	3	<u>,774</u>	No Difference
31-40	145	117,70				
41-50	29	79,74				
51 and above	11	109,86				
Total	225					

Table 21. *Kruskal Wallis test of the perceived risk according to age*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
20-30	40	100,91	3,018	3	<u>,389</u>	No Difference
31-40	145	114,31				
41-50	29	126,83				
51 and above	11	103,18				
Total	225					

Table 22. *Kruskal Wallis test of the advice according to age*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
20-30	40	121,64	1,963	3	<u>,580</u>	No Difference
31-40	145	113,01				
41-50	29	99,83				
51 and above	11	116,14				
Total	225					

Table 23. *One-Way ANOVA of the expertise according to the education level*

Education Level	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Finding
Between Groups	6,168	31	,199	1,569	<u>,036*</u>	Difference
Within Groups	24,472	194	,127			
Total	30,640	225				

Table 24. *Kruskal Wallis test of the idea seeking according to the education level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
High School	20	109,93	1,567	2	<u>,457</u>	No Difference
Bachelor and above	194	111,97				
Pre-high School	11	136,68				
Total	225					

Table 25. *Kruskal Wallis test of the opinion leadership according to the education level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
High School	20	102,65	4,090	2	<u>.129</u>	No Difference
Bachelor and above	194	111,99				
Pre-high School	11	149,55				
Total	225					

Table 26. *Kruskal Wallis test of the perceived risk according to the education level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
High School	20	125,68	4,154	2	<u>.125</u>	No Difference
Bachelor and above	194	109,80				
Pre-high School	11	146,41				
Total	225					

Table 27. *Kruskal Wallis test of the advice according to the education level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
High School	20	119,48	1,876	2	<u>.391</u>	No Difference
Bachelor and above	194	110,99				
Pre-high School	11	136,64				
Total	225					

Table 28. *One-Way ANOVA findings of the expertise according to the income level*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Finding
Between Groups	25,590	31	,825	1,507	<u>.051</u>	No Difference
Within Groups	105,725	194	,548			
Total	131,316	225				

Table 29. *Kruskal Wallis test of the idea seeking according to the income level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
2500 and below	11	132,64	6,254	3	<u>.100</u>	No Difference
2.501-6.500	81	109,84				
6.501-15.500	103	120,10				
15.501 and above	30	89,95				
Total	225					

Table 30. *Kruskal Wallis test of the opinion leadership according to the income level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
2500 and below	11	109,41	1,728	3	<u>.631</u>	No Difference
2.501-6.500	81	116,66				
6.501-15.500	103	114,53				
15.501 and above	30	99,18				
Total	225					

Table 31. *Kruskal Wallis test of the perceived risk according to the income level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
2500 and below	11	155,27	11,302	3	<u>.010*</u>	Difference
2.501-6.500	81	125,17				
6.501-15.500	103	102,53				
15.501 and above	30	100,60				
Total	225					

Table 32. *Kruskal Wallis test of the advice according to the income level*

	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p	Finding
2500 and below	11	133,27	6,121	3	<u>.106</u>	No Difference
2.501-6.500	81	119,42				
6.501-15.500	103	112,82				
15.501 and above	30	88,87				
Total	225					

Table 33. *Status of tested hypotheses*

HYPOTHESES		
H1a	The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to the gender.	REJECTED
H1b	The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to the gender.	ACCEPTED
H1c	The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to the gender.	REJECTED
H1d	The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to the gender.	ACCEPTED
H1e	The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to the gender.	REJECTED
H2a	The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to the age.	REJECTED
H2b	The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to the age.	ACCEPTED
H2c	The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to the age.	REJECTED
H2d	The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to the age.	REJECTED
H2e	The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to the age.	REJECTED
H3a	The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to the education level.	ACCEPTED
H3b	The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to the education level.	REJECTED
H3c	The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to the education level.	REJECTED
H3d	The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to the education level.	REJECTED
H3e	The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to the education level.	REJECTED

H4a	The opinions of the participants about the expertise differ according to their income level.	REJECTED
H4b	The opinions of the participants about the idea seeking differ according to their income level.	REJECTED
H4c	The opinions of the participants about opinion leadership differ according to their income level.	REJECTED
H4d	The opinions of the participants about the perceived risk differ according to their income level.	ACCEPTED
H4e	The opinions of the participants about the advice (recommendation) differ according to their income level.	REJECTED

Figures

Figure 1. Research Model

