



Original article

The Relationship Between Pre-service Teachers' University Preferences and the Sense of Belonging at the University

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Abstract

The study was carried out in order to determine the university preferences of pre-service teacher and their level of belonging to the university, and to reveal the relationship between them. The "Preferring University Scale" developed by Apaydın and Seçkin-Kapucu (2017) was used to determine the reasons for pre-service teachers' university preference, and the "Scale of Belonging to the University" developed by Kahraman (2013) to determine the level of belonging to the university. The level of pre-service teachers' preference for university; While informing about the university, job opportunities, geographical location, financial opportunities, close acquaintances, educational material, students studying at the university are considered within the scope of the effect of high school education; students' university affiliation; were examined within the scope of expectation, motivation, and identification dimensions. Data were obtained from 271 pre-service teachers studying at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Faculty of Education. The data obtained from the pre-service teachers were analyzed with the SPSS-23 program, t-Test, ANOVA tests and correlation analysis were used in the data analysis. When the results of the research were evaluated, it was determined that the mean scores of pre-service teachers regarding the level of preference and belonging to the university were at a moderate level. It was determined that the levels of pre-service teachers' preference and belonging to the university differed significantly according to the variables of gender, university department, reasons for choosing the university, place of residence, and the type of high school they graduated from. It has been determined that there is a moderate relationship between the reasons why pre-service teachers prefer the university and the level of belonging to the university.

Keywords: University Preference, Pre-service Teacher, University Belonging.

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INTRODUCTION

The education received at the university generally plays a very important role in finding employment area for individuals throughout their lives. The expectations of individuals who choose a university in order to study at associate, undergraduate or graduate levels can sometimes be in the form of improving their professional knowledge and skills or social skills beyond employment. In addition, thanks to the education received at the university, individuals can see and evaluate new opportunities and try to choose the ones that are suitable for them. For this reason, it is of great importance to choose the correct university in order to benefit from the highest quality education at the point of shaping the future. On the other hand, choosing a university that is correct or suitable for their expectations is also effective in gaining a sense of belonging to their university. Because a student who feels that he/she belongs to the school where he/she is studying will feel more valuable and think that he/she is accepted by the people around him/her. As stated by Goodenow (1993), individuals' feeling of belonging in the education process is evaluated as the perception that they are accepted and valued, and that they are included in the activities in the classroom. As stated in the studies of Nora and Cabrera (1993), it is seen that belonging is an important component in terms of attendance and commitment at the university level.

University selection is a complex and long-term process that follows the formal high school education program and continues in the form of a faculty, university or vocational education (Apaydın & Seçkin-Kapucu, 2017). With globalization, the issue of competitiveness of students in the international arena has become one of the factors affecting the choice of university (Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999). When this competitive skill is included in a challenging employment market, the issue of choosing where and in which field to receive higher education becomes more complex (Tamtekin-Aydın, 2015). A negative choice about choosing a university is also important as it will have an impact on the academic success and motivation of the students in the future (Briggs, 2006). As stated in Lubbe and Petzer's (2013) research, during the university choice process, students gain an idea about universities through various information sources, the most important of which are brochures, conversations with families and others. Because, individuals generally act with the guidance of their families or social groups to which they belong, about how they can benefit from choosing a university, but they take initiative with their individual preferences, albeit a little. This has begun to be considered as an approach that has become a slogan that does not allow individuals to think for themselves in the society (Lami & Mele, 2014). Therefore, pre-service teachers should obtain information from the right sources about the universities they will attend, as their university preferences will be an important factor in their success throughout their education life. Because the fact that the universities where they will continue their education can meet the needs of the students is seen as a factor in terms of their motivation.

Since the effects of university choice on students' motivation and academic achievement and its importance in terms of employment after graduation are understood, researches are carried out on this

subject and the factors that affect individuals' attitudes about choice are tried to be revealed. As a matter of fact, in Briggs's (2006) research, it was stated that some factors such as the academic reputation of universities, their distance from their families, the location of the university, their perceptions of the university, their employment status after graduation, the social life in the region they are located in, the conditions of entry to the university, and the quality of education may be reasons for choice for students. In the research of Latham and Wedwick (2009), it was seen that teacher candidates give more priority to the social aspects of the campus environment. In the study of Çokgezen (2014), it was determined that the important factors affecting the choice of university are tuition fees, the population of the city where the university is located, the academic performance of the university and the language of instruction of the university. In the research of Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015), they found that the factors affecting the choice of university are handled in three different ways as student-based, institutional and student-institutional. In the same study, factors originating from students; family income, family education, gender, racial group, age, socio-economic status, school performance, institutional ones; results and benefits, perceived image, student-institutional ones are grouped as geographical, information sources and price sensitivity. Therefore, it is possible for pre-service teachers to be affected by certain factors while choosing a university similarly.

Being part of a group and having a sense of social belonging are basic human needs (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Although belonging to a university is a personal phenomenon by its nature, individuals may think that their real lives continue in a different way, even though they actually belong to that university when they are officially registered to a university (Kelly & Mulrooney, 2019). However, although belonging is an important component of developing a sense of community, most young people consider the community not only geographically and spatially, but also as environments where information sharing and social learning take place (Moran, Brady, Forkan, & Coen, 2017). On the other hand, students' commitment to their universities is generally considered to be related to social cohesion (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000). Therefore, the fact that there are students from different groups in universities and that these students spend time in different places can be determinative on their educational experience and sense of belonging to their university (Samura, 2018). As a matter of fact, students' schools are an important place that affects their academic and socio-emotional development as well as their families (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Therefore, it is thought that students with different characteristics, sharing their socialization and educational experiences and accumulating positive experiences in the process of benefiting from the opportunities of the university will enable them to be more connected to their universities.

Studies in the literature show that belonging has an important place for a successful working life and field (Kelly & Mulrooney, 2019; Mulrooney & Kelly, 2020; Pittman & Richmond, 2007). On the contrary, since students who do not have a sense of belonging to their school are more likely to drop

out, it can be said that school belonging is an effective factor on young people (Slaten, Elison, Deemer, Hughes, & Shemwell, 2017). As Tinto (2002) stated in his research, it is an important requirement for students to learn to support their sense of belonging; the more students learn and the more valuable their learning becomes, the more they continue to attend school and graduate. Therefore, understanding the sense of belonging is important in order to determine what needs to be done to increase the success and attendance of students in school (Knehta, Chatzikyriakidou, & McCartney, 2020). In addition, one of the reasons why students choice to come to university is the motivation to work. In other words, it is important for students to know what they have learned in this process. In addition, new learning at the point of making new friends and new experiences and reaching the careers they aim for can be a positive indicator for their personal and academic development. In this way, students want to belong to the academic communities they participate in (Meehan & Howells, 2019). It is thought that teacher candidates' sense of belonging to their universities may increase thanks to the gains they will gain in the universities them choice. In this context, in the present study, it is aimed to examine the university choice and belonging status of teacher candidates in terms of some variables that are thought to be related and to reveal the relationship between university choice and university belonging. The purpose of this study is to examine the variables that affect pre-service teachers' university preferences and their sense of belonging at the university. It is significant to determine the expectations of university students from the universities, to determine their preliminary information about the department and university they study, and to prepare the opportunities for the students that can meet their expectations. The opportunities provided to students and the sense of belonging at the university are related to each other. The activities at the university and the activities that allow students to take part related to their interests affect the university belonging positively. For this reason, working together with different departments and creating activity areas that allow students to take part based on volunteerism is important for universities. The study was carried out to determine the factors affecting the university preferences of pre-service teachers studying in various departments of the faculty of education and their sense of belonging at the university. In this context, the purpose of this study is to answer the following research questions.

- What are the scores of pre-service teachers from the university preference scale?
- What are the scores of pre-service teachers from the sense of belonging at the university scale?
- What are the scores of pre-service teachers from the sub-dimensions of the university preference scale?
- What are the scores of pre-service teachers from the sub-dimensions of the sense of belonging at the university scale?

- Do pre-service teachers' university preference and their sense of belonging at the university differ significantly according to gender?
- Do pre-service teachers' university preference and their sense of belonging at the university differ significantly according to their department?
- Do pre-service teachers' university preference and their sense of belonging at the university differ significantly according to their department?
- Do pre-service teachers' university preference and their sense of belonging at the university differ significantly according to the reason for preferring the university?
- Do pre-service teachers' university preference and their sense of belonging at the university differ significantly according to the university preference order?
- Do pre-service teachers' university preference and their sense of belonging at the university differ significantly according to the place of living for a long time?
- Do pre-service teachers' university preference and their sense of belonging at the university differ significantly according to their high school?
- How is the relationship between pre-service teachers' reasons for choosing the university and their level of sense of belonging at the university?

METHOD

In this part, the research model, sample, data collection tools, and data analysis are presented.

Research Model

This study investigated the relationship between the pre-service teachers' preference for Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and their level of sense of belonging at the university. The study was carried out with the correlational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. Correlational survey models aim to determine whether there is a co-change between two or more variables and, if so, the degree of this change (Karasar, 2012).

Sample

The sample consists of 295 pre-service teachers studying at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Faculty of Education in the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. Missing and erroneous data were excluded from the analysis, and the data from 271 pre-service teachers were analyzed. The data were determined by a simple random sampling method. Simple random sampling method is used when each population unit has the same chance of being selected in the sample (Singh & Mangat, 1996). Demographic information about the pre-service teachers is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Variables	Groups	N	%
Gender	Female	174	64.20
	Male	97	35.79
Department	Social	170	62.73
	Science	101	37.26
The place of living	Village	35	12.91
	Town	81	29.88
	City center	55	20.29
	Big city	100	36.90

Table 1 shows that 271 pre-service teachers consist in the study group and 174 (64.20%) of them were female and 97 (35.79%) of them were male. While 170 (62.73%) of the pre-service teachers are studying in the social department, 101 (37.26%) are studying in the science department. While 35 of the pre-service teachers live in the village (12.91%) for a long time, 81 (29.88%) in the town, 55 (20.29%) in the city center, and 100 (36.90%) in the big city.

Data Collection Tools

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' university preferences and the sense of belonging levels. In the study, the Demographic Information Form was developed by Apaydın and Kapucu (2017) to determine the demographic information of prospective teachers, and the eight sub-dimensions (information about the university, Job opportunities, Geographical location, Financial opportunities, Close acquaintances, Educational material, University education students, high school education effect) and "The Scale of Preferring University" consisting of 31 items; In order to determine the level of belonging to the university, the "Belonging to the University Scale" consisting of three dimensions (Expectation, Motivation, Identification) and 14 questions was applied to determine the sense of belonging at the university of pre-service teachers. Reliability analyzes of the scales are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach alpha values of pre-service teachers university preferring and the sense of belonging at university

University Choice Scale	Cronbach Alpha Value
Information About the University	.789
Job Opportunities	.777
Geographical Location	.702
Financial Opportunities	.839
Acquaintances	.798
Educational Material	.662
Students Studying at the University	.719
The Effect of High School Education	.805
Scale Overall	.915
The Sense of Belonging at University Scale	Cronbach Alpha Value
Expectation	.719
Motivation	.760
Identification	.616
Scale Overall	.747

Data Analysis

The data collected with the measurement tool were analyzed using the SPSS-23 program. The Pearson Correlation technique was used to analyze the relationship between pre-service teachers' university preferences and their level of university belonging. Normality assumptions, kurtosis, and skewness values of the data were examined. In the present study, it was determined whether the groups showed a normal distribution.

Table 3. Kurtosis and skewness values of the pre-service teachers in preferring the university and belonging at university

Scale	Skewness	Kurtosis
UCS	.005	-.513
BUS	.210	.654

Normality for the test, Skewness and Kurtosis values were checked. Skewness value between .005 and .210; Kurtosis value was observed to vary between -.513 and .654. When Kurtosis and Skewness values are between -1.5 and +1.5, it is considered to be a normal distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). The t-Test and One-Way Analysis of Variance were conducted to determine whether the university preference and university belonging levels of the pre-service teachers differ according to the variables.

FINDINGS

Mean Scores Regarding the Levels of Preferring and the Sense of Belonging at University

In this part, general point averages regarding the level of preference and university belonging and the scale point averages related to the sub-dimensions were calculated and the findings were presented.

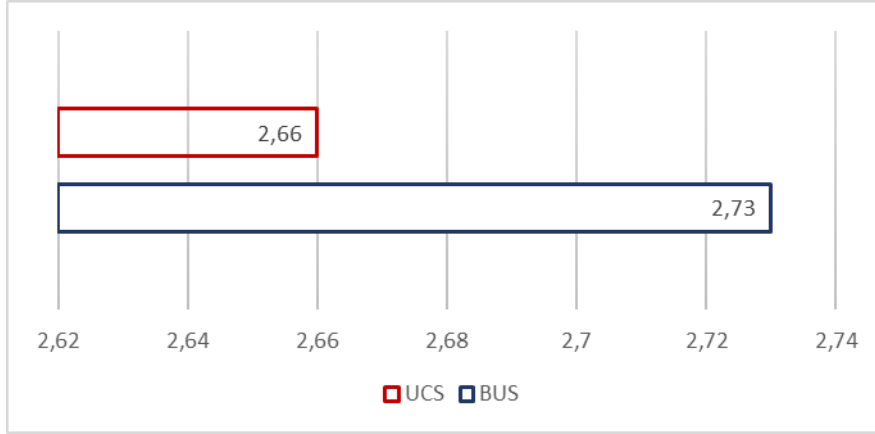


Figure 1. Pre-service teachers' preferring and university belonging levels

The pre-service teachers' preference for and the sense of belonging at university were low. The mean scores of the students on the scale of university choice were ($\bar{X}= 2.66$) and the mean score of the scale related to the level of university belonging was ($\bar{X}= 2.73$).

Average Points Regarding the Level of Preferring the University

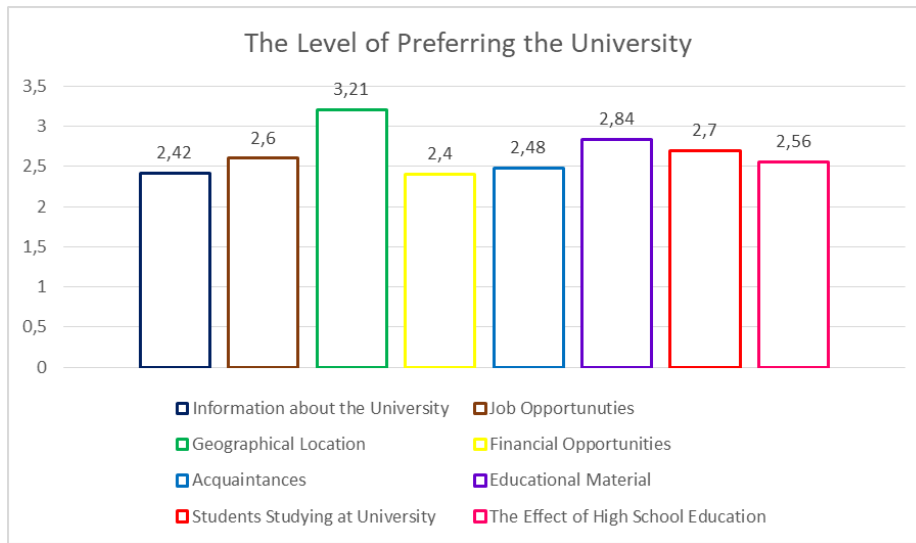


Figure 2. Average scores of the sub-dimensions of university preference levels

The level of preference of the pre-service teachers in the study was discussed as “information about the university, job opportunities, geographical location, financial opportunities, acquaintances, educational material, students studying at the university, high school education effect” respectively. When the university preference levels of the pre-service teachers were examined, they had the highest scale point average in the geographical location and the lowest scale point average in the financial opportunities dimension.

Scale Scores Regarding the Level of University Belonging

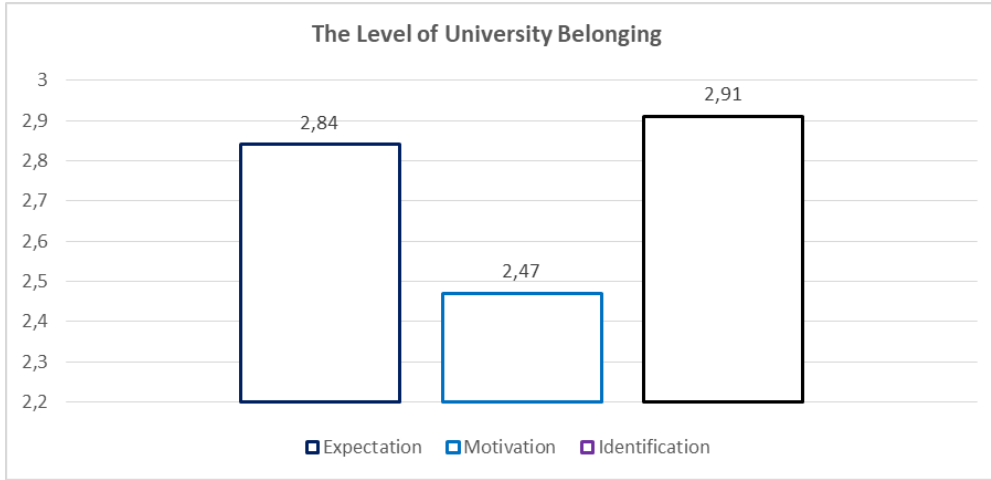


Figure 3. Average scores of the sub-dimensions of sense of belonging at university

The levels of university belonging of the pre-service teachers in the study were handled as “expectation, motivation, identification”. When the levels of university belonging were examined, the highest average score in the dimension of identification and the lowest average score in the dimension of motivation were found.

Examining the Levels of Preferring the University and the Sense of Belonging at University in Terms of Different Variables

In this part of the study, the levels of choosing and the sense of belonging at university were examined according to the gender, department, place of living for a long time, order of preference, reasons for preference, and type of high school graduation. Findings related to the analysis results are presented in tables.

Gender

The t-test was conducted to test whether the levels of pre-service teachers’ preference for and the sense of belonging at university according to gender showed a significant difference. It is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Pre-service teachers university preferring and the sense of belonging at university levels according to gender

Scale	Gender	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	p
UCS	Female	174	2.72	.75	269	2.01	.045
	Male	97	2.54	.62			
BUS	Female	174	2.82	.56	269	3.26	.001
	Male	97	2.56	.70			

According to Table 4, the t-test results show that there was a significant difference between the scale scores of the pre-service teachers regarding the level of preferring university and the sense of belonging at university according to gender. ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores of the female pre-service teachers ($\bar{X} = 2.72$) regarding the level of preferring the university were higher than the male pre-service teachers ($\bar{X} = 2.54$). The mean scores of the female pre-service teachers ($\bar{X} = 2.82$) regarding the level of university belonging were higher than the male pre-service teachers ($\bar{X} = 2.56$).

Department

Table 5. Pre-service teachers' university preferring and the sense of belonging at university levels according to department

Scale	Department	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	p
UCS	Social	170	2.37	.612	269	-9.954	.000
	Science	101	3.14	.624			
BUS	Social	170	2.76	.498	269	.999	.319
	Science	101	2.68	.808			

According to Table 5, the t-test results indicate that there is a significant difference between the scale scores of the pre-service teachers regarding the levels of preferring the university and the sense of belonging at university according to the department, a significant difference was found in the level of preferring university ($p < 0.05$), while the levels of sense of belonging at university were evaluated. There was no significant difference between them ($p > 0.05$). The mean score of the pre-service teachers who are educated in the science department regarding the level of university preference ($\bar{X} = 3.14$) was higher than the pre-service teachers who are educated in the social department ($\bar{X} = 2.37$).

Reason for Preferring the University

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to analyze whether there is a significant difference between the level of pre-service teachers' preference and the sense of belonging at university related to the variable of the reason for choosing the university. The data as a result of the analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. ANOVA table of the levels of pre-service teachers to university preferring and the sense of belonging according to the variable of reason for university preferring

	Variance	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	sd	F	p	Significance
Expectation	Between groups	6.304	2.101	3	2.65	.049	
	Within groups	211.449	.792	267			City attraction
	Total	217.753		270			
Motivation	Between groups	8.774	2.925	3	3.27	.022	
	Within groups	238.408	.893	267			City attraction
	Total	247.183		270			
Identification	Between groups	14.581	4.860	3	6.25	.000	
	Within groups	207.646	.778	267			Own choice
	Total	222.227		270			
Information about the University	Between groups	29.996	9.999	3	10.05	.000	City attraction, closeness to hometown, friend factor
	Within groups	265.631	.995	267			
	Total	295.627		270			
Job Opportunities	Between groups	19.963	6.654	3	6.33	.000	City attraction, own choice
	Within groups	280.622	1.051	267			
	Total	300.584		270			
Geographical Location	Between groups	4.186	1.395	3	1.82	.143	
	Within groups	204.235	.765	267			---
	Total	208.421		270			
Financial Opportunities	Between groups	42.896	14.299	3	14.13	.000	Closeness to hometown
	Within groups	270.044	1.011	267			
	Total	312.941		270			

	Between groups	23.477	7.826	3	7.09	.000	
Acquaintances	Within groups	294.603	1.103	267			City attraction
	Total	318.080		270			
	<hr/>						
Educational Material	Between groups	10.269	3.432	3	3.19	.024	
	Within groups	286.887	1.074	267			City attraction
	Total	297.183		270			
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Students Studying at University	Between groups	9.865	3.288	3	3.15	.025	
	Within groups	278.123	1.042	267			City attraction
	Total	287.989		270			
<hr/>							
The Effect of High School Education	Between groups	5.222	1.741	3	1.22	.300	
	Within groups	378.524	1.418	267			---
	Total	383.745		270			
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BUS	Between groups	.987	.329	3	.823	.482	
	Within groups	106.74	.400	267			---
	Total	107.73		270			
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UCS	Between groups	14.08	4.69	3	9.95	.000	
	Within groups	125.93	.472	267			City attraction
	Total	140.01		270			

In Table 6, the ANOVA test results show that there is a significant difference between the scale mean scores of the pre-service teachers' levels of choosing the university according to reasons for choosing the university [$F(3,267)= 9.95, p< .05$]. According to the results of the Scheffe test, the pre-service teachers who preferred the city attraction ($\bar{X}=3.08$) were higher than the mean scores of the other pre-service teachers. There was no significant difference between the scale scores of the pre-service teachers regarding the level of the sense of belonging at university according to the reasons for choosing university [$F(3,267)= .823, p>.05$]. The pre-service teachers had higher scale scores in the dimension of their own choice at the level of the sense of belonging at university in the dimensions of "expectation" ($\bar{X}=2.95$) and "identification" ($\bar{X}=3.11$) regarding the level of university belonging. In the motivation dimension, the level of university belonging ($\bar{X}=2.77$) of the city attraction was higher than the other reasons.

Regarding the reasons for the university preference levels of the pre-service teachers, the scale score averages of preferring the university were high in the dimensions of “information about the university” (\bar{X} =2.97), “job opportunities” (\bar{X} =3.03), “acquaintances”(\bar{X} =2.99), “educational material” (\bar{X} =3.25), and “students studying at the university”(\bar{X} =2.77) due to the city attraction. On the other hand, in the dimension of financial opportunities, the scale point average of the factor of “closeness to hometown” (\bar{X} =2.78) was higher.

Order of preference

Table 7. ANOVA table of pre-service teachers’ levels of preferring university and their feelings of belonging according to the variable of order of preference to university

Scale	Variance	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	sd	F	p	Significance
UCS	Between groups	2.91	1.45	2	2.84	.06	---
	Within groups	137.09	.512	268			
	Total	140.01		270			
BUS	Between groups	1.797	.898	2	2.27	.105	---
	Within groups	105.93	.395	268			
	Total	107.73		270			

In Table 7, according to the university preference order of the pre-service teachers, there was no significant difference in terms of university preference and the sense of belonging levels according to the ANOVA test regarding the level of university preference [$F(2,268)= 2.84, p>.05$] and the sense of belonging at university [$F(2,268)= 2.27, p>.05$].

Place of Living

Table 8. ANOVA table of pre-service teachers' levels of preferring university and their feelings of belonging according to the variable of place of residence

Scale	Variance	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	sd	F	p	Significance
UCS	Between groups	5.97	1.99	3	3.96	.009	Big City City Centre
	Within groups	134.03	.502	267			
	Total	140.01		270			
BUS	Between groups	5.82	1.94	3	5.08	.002	Big City
	Within groups	101.90	.382	267			
	Total	107.73		270			

In Table 8, there was a significant difference between the place of living regarding the level of university preference [$F(3,267)= 5.92, p<.05$] and the sense of belonging at university [$F(5,265)= 4.99, p<.05$] according to the variable of the place of living of the pre-service teachers. According to the results of the Scheffe test, the scale score of the university choice levels of pre-service teachers living in the big city ($\bar{X}=2.80$) and city center ($\bar{X}=2.79$) was higher than the others. According to the results of the Games Howell test, the pre-service teachers living in the big city ($\bar{X}=2.83$) were higher than the scale point averages of the level of sense of belonging at university.

Type of High School Graduation

Table 9. ANOVA table of pre-service teachers' levels of preferring university and their feelings of belonging by high school graduation type variable

	Variance	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	sd	F	p	Significance
UCS	Between groups	12.639	4.21	3	8.831	.000	Vocational School of Health
	Within groups	127.374	.477	267			
	Total	140.013		270			
BUS	Between groups	2.05	.681	3	1.72	.163	---
	Within groups	105.65	.396	267			
	Total	107.73		270			

In Table 9, the ANOVA test revealed that there was a significant difference according to the reasons for choosing the university [$F(3,267) = 6.199, p <.05$]. According to the results of the Games Howell test, the pre-service teachers who graduated from the Vocational School of Health ($\bar{X}=3.18$) were higher than the mean scores of the pre-service teachers who graduated from other high schools types. There was no significant difference between the scale scores of the pre-service teachers regarding

the level of belonging to the university according to the variable of the type of high school they graduated from [$F(5,267)= 1.72, p>.05$].

The Relationship Between Pre-service Teachers' Levels of University Preference and Belonging

In this part, the relationship between the mean scores of the pre-service teachers regarding their university preference and the sense of belonging level was calculated by the Pearson Product Moments Correlation coefficient. The results are presented in the tables below.

Table 10. Correlation analysis of university preference and university belonging levels

	BUS	UCS
BUS	1	.278**
UCS	.278**	1

A simple linear correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the university preference and belonging levels of the pre-service teachers. There was a significant and positive relationship between the university preference and the sense of belonging levels of the pre-service teachers ($r=.278, p< 0.01$).

To determine the relationship between the sub-dimensions of the level of preferring university and the general average score of the level of the sense of belonging at university, the Pearson Product Moments correlation coefficient was examined. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. University choice and the sense of belonging at university scale scores correlation analysis

	The Sense of Belonging at University	
Preferring the University	Information about the University	.027
	Job Opportunities	.094
	Geographical Location	.121*
	Financial Opportunities	.165**
	Acquaintances	.244**
	Educational Material	.259**
	Students Studying at University	.404**
	The Effect of High School Education	.364**

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of the pre-service teachers' level of preference for the university (information about the university, job opportunities, geographical location, financial opportunities, acquaintances, educational material,

students studying at the university, high school education effect) and their level of sense of belonging at university. A simple linear correlation procedure was performed. As a result of the analysis, the highest significant relationship was found between the level of university preference and the level of sense of belonging at university in the dimension of students studying at the university.

Table 12. Correlation analysis of the sense of belonging at university and university choice scale scores

		Preferring the University
The Sense of Belonging at University	Expectation	.271**
	Motivation	.226**
	Identification	.045

A simple linear correlation procedure was performed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the pre-service teachers' level of belonging to the university sub-dimensions (expectation, motivation, identification) and their level of preference for the university. As a result of the analysis, the highest significant relationship was found in the expectation dimension between the levels of sense of belonging at university and the levels of preferring the university.

Table 13. The results of correlation analysis of preferring university and the sense of belonging at university scores

	Expectation	Motivation	Identification
Information about the University	.000	.195**	-.191**
Job Opportunities	.095	.137*	-.070
Geographical Location	.204**	-.100	.173**
Financial Opportunities	.106	.276**	-.093
Acquaintances	.168**	.246**	.062
Educational Material	.333**	.045	.160**
Students Studying at University	.428**	.180**	.217**
The Effect of High School Education	.330**	.257**	.140*

In Table 13, the relationship between the dimensions of pre-service teachers' preference for university and the sense of belonging levels is examined. The highest correlation was between the students studying at the university dimension of UCS and the expectation dimension of BUS ($r: .428$, $p < 0.01$).

DISCUSSION, RESULTS and SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to examine the relationship between pre-service teachers' levels of preferring the university and the sense of belonging at university in terms of various variables. When the levels of pre-service teachers' preference and the sense of belonging at university were examined, the mean scores of preference and belonging were at a moderate level. When the university preference levels of the pre-service teachers were examined, while they had the highest scale point average in the geographical location dimension, they had the lowest scale point average in the financial opportunities dimension. When the levels of sense of belonging at university were examined, while the scale score averages related to the identification dimension were the highest, they had the lowest scale point averages related to the motivation dimension. Among similar studies, Sheng (2017), Greenacre, Freeman, Cong and Chapman (2014) and Karacabey Özdere, and Boyacı (2016), conducted studies examining the reasons for choosing a university. Pittman and Richmond (2007), indicated that the level of belonging to the university is moderate. Yang and Mutum (2015), stated that the most important factor in students' university preferences is social media. Karacabey, Özdere, and Boyacı (2016), highlighted that among the reasons for choosing a university were the opportunities offered by the university to the students, the general characteristics of the city, and the city opportunities. Knekta, Chatzikiyriakidou, and McCartney (2020), highlighted that there is a relationship between belonging levels and academic achievement. Freeman, Anderman, and Jensen (2007), revealed that the attitudes and behaviors of the instructors affect the university belonging of the students. Sarı and Özgök (2014), indicated that there is a high degree of correlation between the sense of belonging and motivation. When the levels of preference and the sense of belonging at university according to the gender of the pre-service teachers were examined, the scale score averages of the female pre-service teachers were higher.

Türker (2017), found that while the effect of education, scholarship, and the academic program was observed in women's university preference, the effect of academic reputation and social life was higher in men. Arastaman (2006), Yokuş, Ayçiçek, and Yelken (2017); Banat and Rimawi (2017); Sarwar and Ashrafi (2014), noted that female pre-service teachers have a higher sense of belonging at university. While there was no significant difference between the levels of belonging to the university according to the department, the scale score averages of the pre-service teachers studying in the science departments were higher than the pre-service teachers studying in the social departments. While there was no significant difference between the levels of belonging to the university according to the reasons for the preference of the students, the scale score averages of the pre-service teachers who preferred the university with the effect of city attraction were higher than the other pre-service teachers in the level of preference. The effect of this is thought to be factors such as the geographical location of Çanakkale city center and its districts being beautiful and preferable and the variety of transportation opportunities.

In similar studies, Yıldız (2014), focused on the effects of the physical characteristics and location of the city on university preference.

Regarding the factors affecting university preferences, Topaloğlu and Topaloğlu (2018), examined the reasons for the university preference for pre-service teachers. In the study, in line with the opinions of the pre-service teachers, they stated that they preferred the university they attended because of the quality of education. There was no significant difference between the levels of preference and the sense of belonging at university according to the order of preference variable of the pre-service teachers.

According to the place of living of the pre-service teachers for a long time, the scale point averages of the pre-service teachers living in the big city and the city center were higher than the other pre-service teachers. According to the geographical location variable of the level of sense of belonging at university, the pre-service teachers living in the big city have a higher scale score average than the other pre-service teachers. Concerning this, students living in big cities prefer to adapt to a small city more easily, because they can meet their needs in a short time. In a different study, Kahraman and Çırak (2018), noted that there is no relationship between university students' belonging to the university and their place of living before coming to the university.

There was no significant difference between the levels of sense of belonging at university according to the type of high school graduation, the scale point averages of the pre-service teachers who graduated from the vocational school of health were higher than the pre-service teachers who graduated from other high school types. Participating in internship studies during their university education allows the graduates of the vocational school of health to gain experience in their fields. In addition, they contribute to their field knowledge and communication skills since they meet many people in internship applications. Unlike the results of the study, Kahraman and Çırak (2018), determined that the students who graduated from fine arts high school had a higher level of sense of belonging at university. Ayık, Özdemir, and Yavuz (2007); Duru (2022), highlighted that the students who preferred the teaching profession in their university preference were the students who graduated from Anatolian High School.

The relationship between the pre-service teachers' reasons for choosing the university and their level of sense of belonging at the university is at a moderate level. Also, Ancheh, Krishnan, and Nurtjahja (2007), highlighted that there is a high level of correlation between the university preference of students, whether it is a respected and well-established university, and their preference. In the study carried out to determine the factors that affect the university preferences of the students and their level of sense of belonging at university, the geographical location of the students most affected their university preferences. The geographical location of the university is related to conditions such as climatic conditions, transportation opportunities, and closeness with other city centers. It is possible to state that parents allocate a budget for the student's university education regardless of the income group of the students, which is the result of the importance given by the parents to the university education.

The university's education and educational material opportunities provided by the university, which are effective on university preferences, and the presence of role model students who have graduated from the relevant university are the main reasons for preference. In addition to these, reasons such as the fact that there are teachers with a higher number of positions in the faculty of education can be given as an example. In the studies carried out regarding belonging to the university, the university belonging of the students was below the average. This is mostly related to the opportunities provided by the university to the students, whether the university is active in social activities or not, and the fact that the students take part in university studies increases their motivation and enables them to identify with the university.

The study determined the important factors in university preferences and the factors affecting the sense of belonging at university. It is possible to carry out the study with students studying in universities with different characteristics (research university, technical university, etc.) and in different faculties of the university (engineering, science-literature, agriculture, etc.), and compare the university preferences of students in different faculties and their sense of belonging. The study, which is carried out following quantitative research as a correlational survey, can be done with interviews and observations by using qualitative research methods to examine the factors that determine the university preferences and the sense of belonging at the university in-depth.

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