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Social emotional learning skills and educational stress

İsmail ÇELİK

Agri Ibrahim Cecen Univercity, Educational Faculty, City Center, AGRI, Turkey.

The basic aim of this research is to examine the predicting role of social emotional learning skills in educational stress. The participants were 238 adolescents at high school. In this study, the Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale and the Educational Stress Scale were used. The relationships between social emotional learning skills and educational stress were examined using correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis. In correlation analysis, communication ability, problem solving ability, coping ability and self-esteem enhancing ability were found negatively related educational stress. Regression analysis showed that social emotional learning skills are very important predictor of educational stress. The results were discussed in the light of the related literature.

Key words: Social emotional learning skills, educational stress.

INTRODUCTION

People are living under an advanced technological world where instant communications and gratifications are the norm. These, in many way, affect people having the need to live together in a negative way in terms of social emotional aspect. Learning, defined as the change of behavior as a result of an individual's nature and wonder, emerges as the most important concept in educational process (Hilgard, 1948). As set out in the definition of the concept of learning, condition caused by individual's experiences, is also an indicator that it can be realized in various ways. Social emotional learning is one of these.

Social emotional learning is defined as a model that provides students to understand and manage their social relationships and emotions (Elias et al., 1997). Social emotional learning, effective learning, positive behavior, regular attendance and emotional well-being are introduced as a comprehensive concept to encourage all school activities (Humphrey et al., 2009). Development of

social emotional qualifications is the key to reach the success in life and in school. Social emotional learning abilities e consists of communications, problem solving and coping with stress skills (Elias et al., 2006). Social and emotional learning reveals the requirement that events should be considered as a whole rather than cognitive approach considering social and emotional aspects. Individuals should gain social and emotional skills at early ages in order to maintain a happy and balanced social life (Cohen, 1999).

In the research carried by Hallam et al. (2006), a program which is about social emotional learning aspects, used in more than 60% of the primary schools in England set to encourage five basic social emotional skills such as empathy, social abilities, self-awareness, managing emotions and motivation. In the program it is shown that social emotional abilities are learned sufficiently (Humphrey et al., 2009). Social emotional competence

E-mail: icelik@hotmail.com.

requires remaining calm when angry and having solutions in conflict with friends (Payton et al., December 2008). These skills are accepted as learning skills contributing individual.

Learning comes true in the school pursuant to social, emotional and academic elements (Zins et al., 2004; Durlak and others, 2011). Taking a role model pursuant to social relations for learning is aforesaid (Sarıçam et al., 2012). Students learn as a result of cooperation of families and teachers. Relationships and emotional periods play facilitating and complicating role and affect individuals for which how and what they will learn (Elias et al., 1997).

Educational stress

Stress is defined as unsuitable circumstances in life and show similar effects in the educational area as it affects lives with various factors, affects the individuals' lives adversely by disrupting mental health (Conner et al., 2010). One of the important definitions about stress is: stress is a chain of reactions shown psychologically and physically in the presence of a threat (Randolph, 1985). For instance, some requests of environment from people is too much for individuals which weakens the relationship between environment and individual (Can, 2010). Beside negative seen of stress, sometimes there could be positive side in which positive emotions are seen as a result of a success of a job. (Helligel and Slocum, 1989; Bataineh, 2013). When looked for the source of stress it is seen that these sources are job, environment and situation in which the source is individual oneself shown by studies carried out (Hamberger and Lohr, 1984).

According to Selye, stress is defined as a biological concept which is a confronting or an adaptation reactions to a stimulus or an event and it is shown that it manifest itself with a number of symptoms. Adaptation reaction is labeled as general adaptation syndrome by Selye and stated that it happens in three stages. These stages are alarm phase, resistance phase and exhaustion phase. In the alarm phase stimulus are taken as stress and in resistance phase there is seen a resistance of a number of organisms which is more than the normal number. If stress continues for a long time and organism cannot show enough resistance, exhaust phase is seen, balance gets destroyed and cause the body to be ill (Selye, 1978). Even Selye rules out psychosocial factors, thinks that emotional and cognitive stages are effective (Moonmuang, 2005).

Stress, when considered in terms of both business life and education, is an element which can be felt in a continuous manner. Since it shows up depending upon outside factors, it is inevitable for daily life. There could be a need for stress can be mentioned for those who become careless and uninterested (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It can be seen as a motivational source for individuals' active progress (Omoniyi, 2013). In a situation educational life is taken into consideration stress which is for success would motivate the individual in terms of learning.

Present study

It is seen as a necessity to be good in terms of social emotional skills in order to stand in balance in every situation for the individual having adaptation problems in individualistic and social events. Stress, defined as social and emotional or physiological reaction of the organism can be eliminated with development of social emotional learning skills or can be changed in positive way. Social emotional learning skills are the skills that an individual should cope with stress. With the help of stress managing tools, it is seen that people can decrease tension and create a strong social environment (Schmitz et al., 2012). Because of this, research will contribute to eliminate and taking positive sides of stress with social emotional learning skills gained in tension situations that especially adolescents face with in educational environments.

Aim of this research is to analyze relationship between educational stress and social emotional learning skills in adolescents.

Hypothesis 1. Sub-dimensions of social emotional learning skills negatively associated with educational stress.

Hypothesis 2. Social emotional learning skills will predict total educational stress.

METHOD

Participants

The present research was carried out with a sample of 238 high school students, 119 of whom (50%) were females, 119 (50%) were male adolescents from different grade levels enrolled in Turkey. Their ages ranged from 13 to 17 years and their mean age was 14.72 years.

Instruments

Social-Emotional Learning Skills Scale-SELSS (Kabakçı et al., 2010) was used to measure students' social-emotional learning skills. SELSS consists of 40-items divided across four subscales (a) problem solving (11 items), (b) communication (9 items), (c) self-esteem (10 items) and (d) coping with stress (10 items). Participants respond to items on a four-point Likert scale, and both a total score as well as four subscale scores are provided. Total scores can range from 40 to 160, with lower scores indicating fewer social emotional learning skills. Kabakci et al. reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .88 for the total score of alphas between .61 and .83 for subscale scores. Test-retest coefficients were .85 for the total score and between .69 and .82 for subscale scores.

Educational Stress Scale: Sun et al. (2011) developed this scale and Sarıçam et al. (2015) adapted it to Turkish. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of .81 and a significant

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, alphas, and inter correlations of the variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Problem solving skills	1					
2. Communication skills	.68**	1				
3. Self-esteem skills	.91**	.59**	1			
4. Coping with stress skills	.66**	.90**	.55**	1		
5. Social-emotional learning skills(total)	.92**	.88**	.87**	.87**	1	
5. Educational stress	-.71**	-.56**	-.63**	-.55**	-.69**	1
Mean	28.80	25.10	26.83	26.92	107.66	48.28
Standard deviation	4.11	3.47	3.89	3.92	13.64	11.66
Alfa	.79	.74	.81	.84	.80	.73

*p<.05, **p<.01.

result on Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 =3488.103 (p<.001, df=105). Factor loadings ranged from .41 ile .91. Results confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated that 16 items yielded five factor as original form and that the five-dimensional model was well fit ($\chi2$= 123.49, sd= 88 ($\chi2/sd$=1.40), RMSEA= .03, NFI= .97, CFI= .99, IFI= .99, RFI= .96, GFI= .95, SRMR= .041). Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was found as .86 for whole scale, .87 for sub-dimension of pressure from study, .93 for sub-dimension of workload, .90 for sub-dimension of worry about grades, .90 for sub-dimension of self-expectation, .91 for sub-dimension of despondency. In the concurrent validity significant relationship (r= .51) was found between the Educational Stress Scale and School Burnout Scale. Test-retest reliability coefficient was .67 for whole scale. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .40 to .57.

Procedure

Permission for participation of students was obtained from related departments. Students participated in research voluntarily. Prior to administration of scales, all participants were informed about purposes of the study. Relationships between two variables (social-emotional learning skills and educational stress) and their sub-dimensions were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Moreover, data were analyzed by means of simple linear regression analysis using the SPSS program. In the study, the significance level was accepted as .01, which is used in testing hypotheses.

RESULTS

Inter-correlations and descriptive data

Table 1 shows the inter-correlations of the variables, means, standard deviations, and internal consistency coefficients of the variables used.

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that there are significant correlations between dimensions of social-emotional learning skills and educational stress. Problem solving skills (r=-.71, p<.01), communication skills (r=-.56, p<.01), self-esteem skills (r=-.63, p<.01) and coping with stress skills (r=-.55, p<.01) were related negatively to educational stress. Moreover, social emotional learning skills was associated with educational stress (r=-.69, p<.01). That is to say, if social emotional learning skills

Table 2. Simple linear regression analysis for educational stress.

V	R	R^2	F	β	t	p
SELS	.69	.48	217.70**	-.693	14.75	.00

Dependet variable: Educational stress (ES); Independet variable: Social-emotional learning skills (SELS).

score increases, educational stress levels decrease, and vice versa.

The result of the multiple regression analysis

Before creating the Regression Analysis to be used in the current study, the relationships between all variables were taken into consideration. Alternative models were tested with the related sub-dimensions of two varibales and the last finding which demonstrated the most perfect harmony is described in Table 2.

As a result of the regression analysis made, it is observed that the model is significant (R=.693, R^2= .480, F= 217.702, p= 0,000) and the independent variable entering the regression analysis explain 48% of the changes on the dependent variable. Videlicet, social-emotional learning skills are very important predictor for educational stress.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aim of the present study was to determine the relationships among social emotional learning skills and educational stress. Results demonstrated problem solving skills, communication skills, self-esteem skills and coping with stress skills which can be accepted personal abilities are negatively related to educational stress. This finding also shows social emotional learning skills as an important determinant of educational stress. Some details of the results should be further addressed.

In order to respond in a flexible way in the face of life's

challenges is concerned as necessity of having social emotional living skills in which these necessities are called learning skills (Casel, 2014). Situations such as self-confidence, self-management communication skills and problem-solving skills create an environment that the individual can act in a more comfortable way and give more accurate decisions in a situation of stress. According to Collie et al. (2012) high level of social emotional abilities that teachers apply in class are a result of social emotional skills and understanding that make teachers act in a more comfortable way in the class. There are several effects of teachers' comfortable actions in class such as low level of stress, more teaching activities and high level of life satisfaction (Collie at al., 2012). In the light of these descriptions, it is seen that educational stress and social emotional learning skills are concepts that affect each other. Elimination of situations creating tension from educational areas can become true with social emotional learning skills as it is said before. When looked for the researches made before related to this topic, both Elias et al. (1997) and Payton et al. (2009) show that social emotional learning skills encourage students in class, increase capacity of understanding and managing emotions and make easier to cope with tension situations. It is said that these situations decrease educational stress and help create healthier social environment. As a result of researches done, it is seen that students having social emotional learning skills both in school and out of school live motivational situation and there is an increase in their well-being in social roles and survival duties (Elias, 2003). It is said that social emotional environmental conditions are so effective in reaching success and have a decreasing effect on educational stress (Hawkins, 1997).

According to Greenberg (2003), social emotional skills are learned similar to academic learning. In complex situations students face with, reaching academic success and developing social relationships are based on having social emotional learning skills. It is seen that social emotional learning skills program is much more effective in 2-7 age (Tennant et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2004). All these researches show that adolescents maintain a balanced and healthy stance against tension situations become true with social emotional learning skills program applied. These programs are more effective if they are applied in early stages of life. Social emotional learning skills taught in primary and secondary school level is used as preventive power against alcohol, violence, correction of behavior disorders, healthy nutrition and development of life style. These skills decrease the tension which has a source of stress from the negative situations and help to give more accurate decisions and increase the level of well-being (Elias, 2003).

In conclusion, this research reports that the social emotional learning skills and related to educational stress significantly. Students high in social emotional learning skills are low likely to experience educational stress.

Therefore, current study would further our understanding of the significant predictors of educational stress, without forgetting that more research is needed to examine the antecedents of the educational stress. To support the disciplined behavior of individuals within the school formation, teaching skills such as self-control and problem solving is done as a result of social emotional learning programs. By these programs educational stress in individuals will decrease and they will give healthier decisions in a more flexible way (Cohen, 1999). Students get affected by educational stress factors while gaining information and skills necessary for social life. To make a positive impact in this case, there must be a high level of social and emotional learning skills (Bataineh, 2013). Programs carried out at this point will give students skills to overcome the situations they are faced with and to solve problems.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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