

Full Length Research Paper

Effects of high school students' perceptions of school life quality on their academic motivation levels

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This study aims to identify the effects of high school students' perceptions of school life quality on their academic motivation levels. The study was conducted on a sample of high school students (n=2371) in Amasya Province in the fall semester of 2013-2014 academic year. Study sample was selected with the help of cluster sampling method. Data were collected via personal information form developed by researchers, Academic Motivation Scale developed by Bozanoğlu and Quality of School Life Scale developed by Sari. *Multiple Regression Analysis* was used in data analysis to determine high school students' perceptions regarding quality of school life on their academic motivation levels. According to research findings, all the variables of quality of school life predicted academic motivation and its subscales (exploration, self-actualization and using data). The most powerful quality of school life perception variables was found to be negative effects towards school and teachers and the least effective variable was social activity.

Key words: High school, quality of school life, academic motivation, motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The most fundamental responsibility of the school which aims to develop individuals in different aspects is to leave a permanent impact on the new generations. In this context, each school develops a unique culture. Traditions, habits, routines, ceremonies, behaviors that the school introduces and efforts to maintain and sustain all these reflect the basic characteristics of the culture developed at schools. These features reinforce school-life related values, beliefs and expectations of the specific groups at schools (teachers, students, administrators) (Perez Gomez, 1997). There are several factors related to schools that contribute to students' achievement and affect their motivations. For instance, when schools and teachers provide students with a feeling of belonging, and

when schools are safe, student motivation for learning and participation in classes increase. On the other hand, when students cannot accommodate themselves to school and cannot form emotional attachment to school they can be alienated from school due to feelings of loneliness (Mouton and Hawkins, 1996). Undoubtedly, this situation brings specific problems in obtaining educational goals. Feelings of belonging, feelings of safety related to school and having positive feelings and thoughts related to school are related to quality of school life. As quoted by Sari and Cenksever (2008), from Linnakylä and Brunell (1996), quality of school life concept is based on quality of life concept. Quality of life is defined as individuals' perceptions regarding their physical and health conditions

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(Wong et al., 2001). Quality of school life can be considered as the condition of general well being resulting from joining school and being integrated with this environment (Karatzias et al., 2001). Austin et al. (2007) define quality of school life as the school environment that nourishes a positive learning climate reflecting a safe and supportive school environment. Educators pay special attention to quality of school life based on its crucial effects on academic achievement and other outputs of education, therefore; various studies are undertaken in the field (Mok and Flynn, 2002; Sinclair and Fraser, 2002). A study conducted on high school students identified that teacher attitudes, educational programs, peer attitudes, in-school activities and school rules affect how students perceive quality of school life (Batten and Girling-Butcher, 1981). Another study on high school students showed that quality of school life perceptions of female students is higher than those of male students (Karatzias et al., 2001). Research on quality of school life has been in the agenda of educational researchers in Turkey starting with Sarı and Doğanay's (2004, 2006) studies since 2004.

Another concept that emphasizes the effectiveness of educational goals and educational outputs is the concept of academic motivation (Mahto et al., 2012; Tural, 2002; Vallerand and Bissonnette, 1992). Academic motivation, defined as the key to meaningful learning, provides continuity to strengthen concentration towards tasks related to school and lack of academic motivation results in failure in those tasks (Martin, 2003; Legault et al., 2006). Studies that examine the role of motivation in academic achievement mostly focus on challenge, patience-perseverance and fulfillment from the task at hand. These behaviors are accepted as "compatible academic behaviors". In case of lack of academic motivation, behaviors such as giving up in the face of challenges, feeling impatient or inconstant and disliking the task at hand are observed which are considered to be "incompatible academic behaviors" (Colengelo, 1997, cited in Saracoğlu et al., 2009). The fact that academic motivation predicts academic achievement is presented in various studies (McCoach and Siegel, 2001; Ames, 1990, Steinmayr and Spinath, 2009; Amrai et al., 2011; Singh, 2011; Tella, 2007).

In the framework of the related literature, it can be argued that quality of school life and academic motivation concepts predict students' achievement by influencing the effectiveness of educational goals and outputs. It is believed that identifying the effects of quality of school life on academic motivation will contribute to policy makers in education, teachers and students regarding students' achievement. In this context, this study aims to identify the effects of high school students' perceptions of school life quality on their academic motivation levels. Therefore, the problem statement of the study can be expressed as follows: "What are the effects of high school students' perceptions of school life quality on their academic motivation levels?"

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents information about quality of school life and academic motivation concepts.

Quality of school life

Quality of life is a concept that expresses the general wellbeing of individuals, their life satisfaction levels, perceptions of happiness related to self, level of positive outlook to life and the extent of meeting their expectations. In this context, quality of school life is explained by the level of satisfaction from the learning experiences offered to students, level of meeting their interests, goals, needs and expectations, adequacy of teaching methods and techniques used in the teaching process, the quality of communication experienced with stakeholders such as teachers, school administration and peers, level of student participation in school management, amount of quality learning experiences that will provide added value to their future life and the extent of meeting social, emotional and psychological needs at school (İlğan et al., 2013). In short, quality of school life "is the status of well-being that presents itself during students' participation in school life and their engagement with the school environment" (Karatzias et al., 2001, p. 91).

Quality of experiences at school can affect students' attitudes and behaviors. Positive ideas about school, tasks during class and teachers are regarded important for students' psychological health. Positive views can develop other behaviors related to school and learning. On the other hand, having negative views regarding school can result in unsatisfactory daily experiences at school and hamper learning (Johnson and Johnson, 1993). In this context, it can be argued that quality of school life has an important place in the development of students academically and in other areas.

Academic motivation

Academic motivation refers to the factors which have the power to allow the individual to continue school life and reach a targeted goal (Clark and Schroth, 2010: 19). Psychologists believe that motivation is an important factor for learning. They also argue that it is not possible to provide meaningful learning at schools without sufficient motivation for learning (Biehler and Snowman, 1986; Tella, 2007, cited in Fontena, 1981). Students with high motivation study more, are more determined to overcome barriers and difficulties and feel satisfied when they complete a learning task successfully (Laing, 2011:5). Low motivation results in halfhearted school work. Avoidance motivation results in avoidance of the behavior as well. Individuals who display low motivation or avoidance motivation are generally more prone to

Table 1. The demographic information of students participating in the study.

		F	%
Gender	Female	1165	49.1
	Male	1206	50.9
Grade level	9. grade	614	25.9
	10. grade	610	25.7
	11. grade	575	24.3
	12. grade	572	24.1
Total		2371	100

socially unapproved behaviors (Adelman and Taylor, 2011: 15).

Lack of academic motivation also generates feelings of disappointment and displeasure and decrease productivity (Legault et al., 2006). In that case, decreases in academic performance, inability to undertake academic tasks, behaviors related to procrastination or evasion may materialize. Research has identified that especially academic procrastination is a concept that is the exact opposite of motivation (Klassen et al., 2008; Senecal et al., 2003; Brownlow and Reasinger, 2000). This situation can negatively affect learning outputs.

METHOD

The population- sample

The population of the study is composed of students attending high schools in Amasya Province Center and districts in the fall semester of 2013-2014 academic year (N=18013). Sample of the study included 2371 (n=2371) students selected with the help of cluster sampling method from the high schools located in Amasya Province Center and districts.

According to Table 1, 49% of the participating high school students were females and 50.9% were males. Distribution of students based on classroom level shows that 25.9% were in 9th grade, 25.7% in 10th grade, 24.3% in 11th grade and 24,1% in 12th grade.

Data collection tools

Personal Information Form, Quality of School Life Scale and Academic Motivation Scale were used as data collection tools in the study. *Personal Information Form* including questions that aim to obtain demographic information of participants was prepared by researchers.

Academic Motivation Scale was developed by Bozanoğlu (2004). The 20-item scale is composed of three subscales: exploration, self-actualization and using data. The 5-point Likert type scale has Cronbach Alpha reliability values between .72 and .76 for the dimensions and .88 for the whole scale. In the current study, Cronbach Alpha reliability values were found to be between .70 and .86 for the dimensions and .89 for the whole scale.

Quality of School Life Scale was generated by sari (2011) through reviewing the Scale of Quality of School Life in High Schools

(SQLSLS) developed by Sari et al. (2007). SQLSLS is a measurement tool with a total of 7 sub scales ("teachers", "positive affects towards school", "status", "school administrators", "negative affects towards school", "students" and "social activities") and a total of 35 items with a 5-point Likert type scale from 1 through 5. Internal consistency coefficients of these 7 sub scales that explain 60.59% of the total variance changed between .86 and .68, according to the Cronbach Alpha coefficients.

The scale has 14 negative and 21 positive statements. Cronbach Alpha values for the current study were found to be .71 and .87.

Data analysis

The effect of quality of school life on academic motivation was determined with the help of multiple regression analysis technique. The enter method was chosen to determine the common effect of academic motivation on all variables related to the quality of school life. SPSS 20 package program was used in data analysis.

FINDINGS

Effects of quality of school life on academic motivation levels were examined in the current study. Table 2 presents the results of multiple regression analysis undertaken to determine the effects of quality of school life on high school students' academic motivation levels.

Table 2 displays a medium level significant relationship between quality of school life sub dimensions and academic motivation ($R=0,542$, $R^2= 0,29$, $p<0,1$). Along with its sub dimensions, quality of school life explains about 29% of the total variation in academic motivation.

According to standardized regression coefficients (β), the order of importance of predictor variables on academic variation is as follows: negative effects towards school, teachers, student, principal, status, positive effects towards school and social activities (with the least effect). Examination of t-test results for the significance of regression coefficients shows that all variables related to quality of school life are significant predictors of academic variation. According to the regression analysis results for the prediction of academic motivation about the regression equation are as follows:

Total Academic Motivation General Perception= 39.95; +0.750, Teacher;+0.224, Pats;+0.312, Status;+0.236, Principal;+0.849, Nats; -0,320, Teacher;-0,170, Social Activity

Investigation of the effects of quality of school life on each academic motivation dimension displays a medium level relationship ($R=0,541$, $R^2=0,29$, $p<0,1$) between all variables of quality of school life and self-actualization; a medium level relationship ($R=0,435$, $R^2=0,19$, $p<0,1$) between all variables of quality of school life and using data and a medium level relationship ($R=0,475$, $R^2=0,23$, $p<0,1$) between all variables of quality of school life and exploration. Along with its sub dimensions, quality of school life explains about 29% of the total variation in

Table 2. Results of regression analysis for quality of school life and academic motivation.

	Variable	B	Standard error	β	t	R	R ²	F	p
Academic motivation general perception	Constant	39.948	1.528	-	26.146	.542	.29	140.552	.000
	Teacher	.750	.056	.237	13.282				
	Pats	.224	.054	.088	4.146				
	Status	.312	.064	.091	4.876				
	Principal	.236	.049	.097	4.824				
	Nats	.849	.059	.281	14.322				
	Student	-.320	.047	-.126	-6.873				
	Social Activity	-.170	.076	-.044	-2.253				
Self- actualization	Constant	12.928	.513	-	25.192	.541	.29	139.817	.000
	Teacher	.257	.019	.279	13.558				
	Pats	.028	.018	.033	1.563				
	Status	.105	.021	.091	4.901				
	Principal	.093	.016	.114	5.676				
	Nats	.290	.020	.286	14.571				
	Student	-.073	.016	-.086	-4.686				
	Social Activity	-.013	.025	-.010	-.0506				
Using data	Constant	11.604	.566	-	20.518	.435	.19	79.006	.001
	Teacher	.184	.021	.195	8.821				
	Pats	.091	.020	.103	4.564				
	Status	.085	.024	.071	3.577				
	Principal	.068	.018	.080	3.732				
	Nats	.244	.022	.234	11.128				
	Student	-.105	.017	-.119	-6.074				
	Social Activity	-.087	.028	-.064	-3.101				
Exploration	Constant	14.105	.617	-	22.851	.475	.23	98.554	.001
	Teacher	.257	.023	.234	11.282				
	Pats	.106	.022	.107	4.851				
	Status	.133	.026	.100	5.149				
	Principal	.044	.020	.046	2.206				
	Nats	.259	.024	.222	10.819				
	Student	-.127	.019	-.130	-6.777				
	Social Activity	-.044	.031	-.029	-1.455				

p<.01. Pats: Positive effect towards school; Nats: Negative effect towards school.

self-actualization dimension of academic motivation; about 19% of the total variation in using data dimension and about 23% of the total variation in exploration dimension. According to standardized regression coefficients (β), the most effective predictive variable on self-actualization and using data dimensions is negative effects towards school followed by teachers and it was found that the variable with the least effect is social activities. Examination of the order of relative importance of exploration dimension shows teachers as the first variable followed by negative effect towards school; whereas status is the last variable of significance. Examination of t-test results related to the significance of

regression coefficients displays that all variables regarding quality of school life are meaningful predictors of self-actualization, using data and exploration sub dimensions of academic motivation.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effects of quality of school life on high school students' academic motivation levels. Medium level significant relationships were detected between all variables of quality of school life and academic motivation and its sub dimensions. The study

conducted by İlğan et al., (2013) on 747 secondary school students also identified medium level meaningful relationships between quality of school life and academic motivation.

The study also found that all variables of quality of school life are significant predictors of general academic motivation level and its self-actualization, using data and exploration sub dimensions. The variables with the highest effect on academic motivation and its sub dimensions were found to be negative effects towards school and teachers and the variable with the least effect was identified to be social activities.

One of the variables that significantly predict academic motivation is negative or positive effect towards school. According to Stern and Stern (2012), positive or negative effects towards school are represented by attitudes towards school. McCoach's (2000) study identified positive relationships between attitudes towards school and motivation (Cited in Stern and Stern, 2012). According to Jessor et al. (1995), positive attitudes towards school affect academic achievement and academic motivation positively (Cited in Stern and Stern, 2012). Positive attitudes towards school also prevent negative events such as dropping out of school and undesired behaviors at school (Renchler, 1992). Students' attitudes towards classes and teachers are positively related to academic achievement (McCoach and Siegel, 2001). Wentzel and Asher (1995) also stated that affective commitment to school positively affects academic motivation.

Another variable that affects academic motivation meaningfully is the teachers. It is observed that academic motivations of students that form positive attachments to their teachers are higher. This type of attachment also ensures the ability to cope with stress, accepting criticism and paying more attention to teachers (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Yunus et al., 2011 cited in Little and Kobak (2003). Jaavall (2007) expressed that the most important factor that affects students' perceptions regarding quality of school life is their relationships with their teachers and students regard teachers' level of commitment and interest in students as the most effective factors. In their study with teacher candidates, Yunus et al. (2011) found that positive relationships between teacher and students are effective and important on students' motivation and academic achievement. Studies in turkey on the effects of teachers' attitudes on students' achievement also identified that teachers' personal characteristics and variables such as age and seniority are reflected on students' motivation in different ways (Bozgeyikli, 2002; Deniz et al., 2006; Sünbül et al., 2003; Emir and Kanlı, 2009; Uçgun, 2013).

Relationships among students or views about other students, one of the variables of quality of school life, were identified to be significant predictors of academic motivation. There are arguments supporting the idea that forming close relationships with peers contributes to

students' cognitive development (Hartup,1996) as well as arguments expressing that negative peer relationships may cause negative results by decreasing academic motivation towards school (Buhs and Ladd, 2001). According to Wentzel and Ahsher (1995), teachers may develop negative effect and attitudes towards students with negative statuses due to having negative relationships with their peers and may protest against them in the long run. This situation may cause failure. According to Jacobson and Burdsal (2012), who conducted a study on adolescents, their interpersonal relationships in social processes should be examined in order to understand their academic achievement motivations. According to Nelson and DeBacker's (2008) study on adolescents, there are positive relationships between students' achievement and peer relationships. Academic motivations of students who are regarded as valuable and respectable are influenced positively. Also, according to Resnick et al. (2004), having academically successful friends positively contributes to academic motivation. On the other hand, students who form relationships with others who have negative attitudes towards school generally have lower academic performance (Veronneau et al., 2008; Nelson and DeBacker, 2008). In general, the majority of studies show that positive social relationships significantly increase academic motivation (Wentzel and Asher, 1995; Juvonen and Wentzel, 1996; Wentzel and Caldwell 1997; Anderman and Anderman, 1999; Buhs and Ladd, 2001; Ryan and Patrick, 2001; Welsh et al., 2001).

Study results point to significant effects of school administrators on academic motivation. School administrators are expected to motivate students and teachers who have low levels of motivation to ensure learning and provide a good school environment in terms of management (Grogan and Andrews, 2002; Balyer, 2012, cited in Hess and Kelly, 2005; Salazar, 2007). Creating a school culture by school administrators that supports academic motivation and academic achievement positively affects academic motivation. Leithwood and Montgomery (1984) stated that effectiveness of school administrators is related to students' motivation. The authors have explained the variables in the effectiveness of school administrators as the ability to manage, being humanistic and ability to systematically solve problems (Cited in Renchler, 1992). Maehr's (1991) study shows that psychological environment at the school affects students' motivation. Psychological environment of the school refers to the school climate which is also dependent on the qualities of the school administrator. In a negative school climate, communication between administrators and other elements of the school is weak. There are unclear rules and reward systems. There are no policies regarding the operations against erroneous behaviors. Students believe that they are not valued or respected by the educators. There are expectations for students to fail. There is low morale in students and

teachers (Hernandez and Seem, 2004).

Another quality of school life variable that has significant effect on academic motivation is the social activities. Schools are social organizations in which children and youths attend for a certain period for specific purposes and join in activities. Basic functions of schools are related to the actualization of innate skills in the best possible manner. Students are expected to self-actualize and adapt to society while becoming beneficial to society. One of the basic conditions of training well qualified individuals is to ensure that they spend their recreational time both in the family and school environments meaningfully and to get satisfaction from tasks at hand. Activities such as games, dances and various sports included in school programs are both beneficial for physical development, mobility and motor development of the children and for the development of social skills such as belonging to a group, adapting to environment and cooperation (Simpkins et al., 2006). Moore (1995) studied the preferred activity types and the reasons for participation in social activities. Students participated in activities to communicate with the others (54.5%), gain experiences or skills (29.2%), have fun (24.3%) and obtain personal satisfaction (19.3%). There are several research findings related to the relationship between participation in social activities and students' achievement. For instance, Skinner et al. (1998) emphasized that participation in school activities positively affects academic achievement. Yavuzer (2000) conducted a pilot study on 335 5th graders by forming unsuccessful (experimental) and successful (control) groups and examined the factors that cause failure. According to results, 67% of the successful children were active and leaders in classroom activities and 88% were active and provided leadership in out of class social activities. Results of the study conducted on secondary school students by Akandere et al. (2010) show that students who do sports in their recreational time have higher intrinsic motivation scores and that intrinsic motivation scores increase along with the frequency of doing sports. In short, related literature points to the effects of all variables of quality of school life on the levels of academic motivation. Therefore, it can be argued that results of the current study are parallel to the results found in literature.

Suggestions are provided below in line with the research results:

1. Teachers should try to develop positive relationship with their students. A learning environment with constantly open communication channels can be generated to achieve this purpose.
2. Teachers and school administration should make students feel valued.
3. School administrator should create a school culture that supports and rewards academic motivation and academic achievement.

4. A positive climate should be developed at school by school administration.
5. Social activities in line with student interests should be organized by considering the effects of social activities on academic motivation; student participation should be encouraged as well.
6. Cooperative work teams that will contribute to the formation of positive interpersonal relationships can be organized.
7. School administrators and teachers can be provided information regarding the sub dimensions of quality of school life and the topic of increasing quality of school life can be included in the vision statement of schools.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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