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PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS ON FACTORS IN MOTIVATION TO LEARN

ABSTRACT

The purposes of this article are as follows: (1) to determine primarily student related motivational factors and their level of importance for motivation to learn, (2) to determine primarily teacher related motivational factors and their level of importance for motivation to learn, and (3) to provide research based suggestions for teachers to motivate their students. For these purposes a questionnaire was developed and applied to students of Faculty of Education, Celal Bayar University, Turkey. According to students' responses the five most important student related motivating factors are as follows: "Having every kind of family supports to your learning", "Believing that classes are very important and useful for your future", "Having interest to the content of learning subject", "Having a very eagerly personality to learn", and "Believing that you are valuable for your instructors and friends".

Keywords: Student Motivation, Motivation to Learn, Motivational Factors, Student Related Motivating Factors, Instructor Related Motivating Factors

ÖĞRENME MOTİVASYONUNU ETKİLEYEN FAKTÖRLER HAKKINDA ÖĞRENCİ ALGILARI

ÖZET

Bu makalenin amaçları 3 maddede toplanabilir: (1) öğrenci merkezli güdülenmişlik faktörlerini ve bu faktörlerin önemlilik düzeylerini belirlemek. (2) Öğretmen merkezli güdülenmişlik faktörlerini ve bu faktörlerin önemlilik düzeylerini belirlemek. (3) Öğretmenlere, öğrencilerini güdülemelerine yönelik olarak araştırma temelli öneriler sağlamak. Bu amaçlar için bir anket geliştirildi ve Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi öğrencilerine uygulandı. Öğrenci cevaplarına gore önem düzeyi en fazla olan 5 öğrenci merkezli güdülenmişlik faktörü şunlardır: "Öğrenmede, ailenin öğrenciye her türlü desteği sağlaması", "Öğrencinin, dersin önemine ve mesleki açıdan faydalı olduğuna inanması", "Ders içeriğinin öğrenci ilgisini çekmesi", "Öğrencinin, öğrenmeye meraklı bir kişiliğe sahip olması" ve "Öğrencinin, sınıfta öğretmenlerinin ve arkadaşlarının kendine değer verdiklerine inanması."

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrencilerin Güdülenmesi, Öğrenme Güdülenmişliği, Güdüleme Faktörleri, Öğrenci Merkezli Güdülenmişlik Faktörleri, Öğretmen Merkezli Güdülenmişlik Faktörleri

1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

Improving students' academic achievement is a very important issue for educators. There are a lot of factors that effect students' academic success. Some of these factors are related to genetic attributes of students and some of them are related to environmental conditions provided to students. Literature has helped to highlight the importance of motivation to learn. As Ansolone & Ming (2006) mentioned "in the past, attempts to explain the disparity in academic achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged students have generally focused on the ability, aptitude and motivation of the youth themselves and educational structures operating within the school may be at least particularly responsible for the academic achievement of students."

One of the important factors of learning is motivation. A lot of studies have been performed to find some ways to motivate learners for improving their learning levels. Motivation is so crucial in teaching and learning that almost impossible to teach effectively someone who is unmotivated to learn. According to Glynn, Aultman, & Owens (2005) "motivation is an internal state that arouses, directs, and sustains human behavior. It plays a fundamental role in learning." Generally talking, motivation levels of students are not adequate for most of the instructors. Motivating students is one of the obstacles in teaching. Kostelecky, & Hoskinson, (2005) made it clear that; "an ongoing struggle for many instructors is motivating their students to learn. Students seem to be particularly unmotivated to learn material that appears uninteresting to them or unrelated to their own life experiences and career goals. It is certainly not the case that students can not be motivated or are incapable of learning. They are motivated to learn all kinds of things in their lives - the most efficient and warmest way across campus on a cold and windy day, how to get the best tickets to a sporting event or concert, and many other things that they feel are important and relevant to their lives. However, this kind of motivation and learning does not always seem to fit very well with activities and assignments in the classroom."

Understanding what motivate students also one of the issues that got interest of many researchers. As Seifert (2004) pointed out, "psychologists have spent considerable effort trying to construct theories of motivation, particularly in the academic context." "Psychological measures of motivation first were developed roughly 75 years ago, in a creative if somewhat chaotic time of psychological research (Mayer, Faber, and Xu, 2007)."

Wang and Reeves (2007) pointed out that motivational theory should be applied to as many aspects of the learning process as possible. There are some important theoretical studies to provide a motivation model. Some important theories of motivation were developed. Some of them are as follows:

Circle of motivation (need, behavior, and satisfaction),

- Mashlow's theory of hierarchy of needs,
- Douglas McGregor's X and Y Theory,
- Alderfer's ERG Theory,
- McClellan's Acquired Needs Theory,
- Cognitive Evaluation Theory,
- Herzberg's Two Factors Theory,
- Equity Theory,
- Reinforcement Theory,
- Vroom's Expectancy Theory,
- Locke's goal setting theory.

According to Palmer, D. (2005), motivation has been recognized as an important factor in the construction of knowledge and the process of conceptual change, so one could expect that motivation strategies would be integral components of constructivist-informed teaching.

Determining that what factors effect students' motivation to learn is an important issue related to motivation to learn. As it is well known there are so many studies to clarify this issue. Some very brief examples of these kinds of studies are as follows:

Kostelecky and Hoskinson, (2005) pointed out that, "If instructors want to motivate their students, they must first understand what motivation is. Typically, motivation has been defined as an internal state or condition that activates, guides, and maintains or directs behavior (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981; Schunk, 1990). The sources of motivation are generally categorized as being either intrinsic (from within the person) or extrinsic (external to the person). Not all students will be motivated by the same needs, desires, values, wants, and goals. Some students are motivated by a drive for personal success (intrinsic) and others from their peers or by challenges in the classroom itself (extrinsic). A person is more in control and more vested in their learning if they are internally motivated. They seem to have a stake in the outcome. The instructor should therefore focus on teaching in a way that the students feel intrinsically satisfied in the classroom. Internally motivating students allows them to decide for themselves if and when they will engage in the learning process. Once they do, their learning takes on a more personal meaning and may become more important to them."

Breen and Lindsay's (2002) findings reveal that student performance is better explained by within- than across- discipline indexes of motivation lead to success in some discipline but failure in others.

Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham, Motoike (2001) pointed out that, "Many variables can have an influence on a student's academic achievement. In addition to cognitive factors such as IQ and standardized test scores, which have traditionally been associated with academic achievement, it is also important to examine the noncognitive factors associated with academic performance."

Wong, Wiest, and Cusick (2002) pointed out that, "A growing body of literature supports an association between students' motivation and socializing agents (i.e., parents and teachers). Specifically, numerous studies have shown that students' perceptions of positive relationships with parents and teachers contribute to success in academic settings. In addition, intrapersonal variables such as perceived competence, perceived control, and perceived autonomy support have been shown to affect young adolescents' achievement and motivation. Finally, researchers have also identified systematic links between these interpersonal and intrapersonal variables."

Drew (1994) mentioned that factors that can account for poor motivation include perceived irrelevance of courses to their everyday lives, unrealistic perceptions of their learning skills, low self confidence, personal problems, time constraints, and ineffective instructional strategies.

According to Pintrich (1994) four classroom contextual factors can influence student academic motivation at the classroom level:

- the nature of the academic tasks,
- the reward and goal structures,
- the instructional methods, and
- the instructor's behavior.

Anderson, Hattie, and Hamilton (2005) have found "statistically significant differences between schools for motivation and achievement and also a mediating effect between locus of control and school type, suggesting that interactional models are required in investigations of motivation and achievement."

Philippe and Vallerand (2008), have examined the impact of the actual environment on changes in psychological adjustment over time. In their study they tested the hypothesis that environments trigger a motivational sequence that influences people's perceptions of autonomy and self-determined motivation in life that in turn affect psychological adjustment. Their findings support that the actual environment plays an important role in providing people with opportunities to fulfill their needs.

Hancock's (2001) study results showed that "all students, regardless of their tendencies toward test anxiety, achieve more poorly under conditions of high evaluative threat. In other words, classroom situations in which students perceive the need to compete with one another and in which professors exert significant influence over classroom procedures and student behavior negatively influence student performance on examinations." Hancock (2001) also pointed out that "all students, particularly test-anxious students, perform poorly and are less motivated when exposed to highly evaluative classrooms offers an important consideration for higher education professors. To help students master course content and remain motivated to learn, university and college professors might lessen their control over classroom procedures and the extent to which students perceive the need to compete with one another. As a minimum, professors should consider the impact of highly evaluative educational environments on students' achievement and motivation when they design and implement higher education courses."

Lam, S.F., et al. (2004) investigated the effects of competition on learning motivation among Chinese students in an authentic classroom setting. The results of their study made it clear that "students in the competitive condition performed better in easy tasks than their counterparts in the non-competitive condition. However, they were more performance-oriented and more likely to sacrifice learning opportunities for better performance. They were also prone to have worse self-evaluation after failure. Although there were no statistically significant differences between the two conditions in task enjoyment and achievement attribution, the direction of the differences was consistently unfavorable to students in the competitive condition."

Lam and Law (2007) investigated what and how instructional practices are related to students' motivation and performance in writing. Their Research results showed that students' motivation mediated the effects of instructional practices on writing performance. The authors found that when the teachers adopted more motivating teaching strategies, the students were more motivated. When the students were more motivated, they, in turn, had better performance in writing.

Fries and Dietz (2007) mentioned that, "the presence of a tempting alternative activity (here, watching video clips) had a detrimental impact on deep learning outcomes (i.e., the situation model) but not on the surface learning outcomes (i.e., text basis). The results of the experiment provide evidence for the existence of motivational interference as a phenomenon that occurs during learning if temptations are present." Fries and Dietz (2007) also pointed out that "researchers on learning motivation should consider that a student studying for an exam while knowing about an attractive

alternative experiences a situation that is motivationally different from that of a student studying without such knowledge."

DeBacker and Nelson's (2000) study showed that, "high achievers and physical science students had higher scores than did low achievers and biological science students on academic goals, valuing science, and perceived ability. Boys had higher scores than did girls on perceived ability and stereotyped views of science. For only a subset of variables, these main effects were moderated by class type using achievement-level interaction. The class type main effect was moderated by gender in only one instance. Gender did not interact with achievement level for any variable."

According to Komarraju, Karau, and Ramayah (2007) "it is vital to the future of society to enhance the learning and academic achievement of students, especially those in higher education. Given that student motivation likely plays a key role in learning and academic performance, it is crucial to develop a better understanding of the determinants and facets of academic motivation." Their research results focused on the importance of culture to students' academic motivation. Specifically, cultural factors explain significant variance in three aspects of motivation: (a) overall levels of academic motivation, (b) differences in specific dimensions of academic motivation, and (c) the structure and interrelationships among specific motivational components within each culture.

It is very obvious that motivation is a very important in students' learning. A university student can learn very well if he has a high level of learning motivation. Opposite of this idea also true: A university student can not learn very well if he has a low level of learning motivation. Many learning approaches include the level of learning motivation in their model to explain learning level such as Caroll's model of school learning and Bloom's mastery learning.

2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of importance of motivating factors to learn for students of the Faculty of Education in Celal Bayar University, Turkey. The student motivating factors in this study classified as primarily student related and primarily instructor related motivating factors in learning.

The research questions were as follows:

- What are students' feelings about some independent variables effect students' motivations to learn and are there any significant differences on these independent variables between female and male students?
- What are students' perceptions of the importance of primarily student related motivating factors in learning?
- What are students' perceptions of the importance of primarily instructor related motivating factors in learning?

3. METHOD (YÖNTEM)

The study consisted of 681 participants who were students in the Faculty of Education in Celal Bayar University, Manisa, Turkey. Of the total sample, 182 were Primary School, 174 were Social Sciences, 165 were Turkish Language and 160 were Hard Sciences department students, all of them were teacher candidates. Of the total sample, 350 were 3rd year students and 331 were 4th year students, and 353 were female and 328 were male students. Participants were approached on the classes, asked to fill out the questionnaire.

To determine the level of importance of factors that effect students' motivation to learn, a wide range of literacy was reviewed. The theoretical framework of the learning motivation in the literature provided the basis for the development of statements for a questionnaire. In order to fill out the questionnaire, students were required to respond on a 5-point (1 to 5) Likert-type scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the beginning, 200 statements related to student's motivation to learn were determined. Then some combinations of the statements were made and some of them were eliminated to make scale more clear. Some professional experts' opinions were taken to develop the scale. Finally a 72 item Likert-type scale was constructed. 35 items out of 72 were primarily student related factors and 27 items were primarily instructor related factors. This is not a scale development study, each statement was interpreted and discussed separately.

4. FINDINGS (BULGULAR)

- **Students' feelings about some independent variables effect students' motivations to learn**

Some independent variables were included to this study; these independent variables and their level of importance are given below. According to students' perceptions, "the level of importance of being successful in their profession" (M=4.45) was found very high.

"Students' perception of their self-esteem level" (M=4.04), "their positiveness for life" (M=3.88), "loving level of their major" (M=3.82), and "importance of getting high grades" were found high.

"General motivation level to learn" (M=3.46), "perseverance level to learn" (M=3.45), "belief about quality of life standards that their university education will provide to them" (M=3.25), "economical situations" (M=3.18), and "beliefs of unnecessarily of hard working for classes" (M=3.00) of students were found in middle level.

"Students' approximately study time for academic study in a week" was found 2.00 hours, which is very low.

- **Sex Differences on Independent Variables of the Study**

Independent variables of the study were compared by subjects' sex to see if are there any significant differences between female and male subjects, and the results are given below.

No significant differences have been found between female and male subjects on 3 factors: "Their self-esteem level", "Positivisity for life", and "Quality of life standards that their university education will provide to them." In other words, there are no significant differences between female and male subjects on their self-esteem level, positivisity for life, and their belief about quality of life standards that their university education will provide to them.

Statistically significant differences have been found between female and male subjects for 8 factors, given below:

"The level of importance of being successful in their profession": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 4.57 and 4.33 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)= 4.598$, $p< 0.001$. So, the level of importance of being successful in their profession is more important factor for females than males.

"Loving their major": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 3.90 and 3.73 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)=2.29$, $p:0.022$. So, females' love of their major is higher than males.

"Importance of getting high grades": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 3.91 and 3.50 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)=5.533$, $p<0.001$. So, getting high grades is more important for females than males.

"General motivation level to learn": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 3.58 and 3.34 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)=3.731$, $p<0.000$. So, females' general motivation level is higher than males' general motivation level to learn.

"Their perseverance level to learn": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 3.52 and 3.38 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)=2.156$, $p:0.031$. So, females' perseverance level is higher than males to learn.

"Their economical situations": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 3.24 and 3.10 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)=3.043$ and $p:0.002$. So, females' perception of their economical situations is more optimistic than males.

"Their believes of unnecessarily of hard working for classes": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 2.76 and 3.27 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)= -6.512$, $p<0.000$. So, "the level of belief that hard working is necessarily" is higher for females than males.

"Students' approximately academic study time in a week": The means of this question for female and male subjects were 2.22 and 2.76 respectively, a significant difference has been found between female and male subjects with $z(679)= -5.692$ $p<0.000$. So, males spent more time than females for academic studies.

- **The level of Importance of Primarily Student Related Motivation Factors to Learn**

Items of primarily student related motivation factors to learn and their arithmetic means, in mean order (from higher to lower) are given in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Primarily Student Related Motivating Factors and Their Arithmetic Means, on 5 point (1 to 5) Scale
(Tablo 1. Öğrenci merkezli güdülenmişlik faktörleri ve 5 üzerinden aritmetik ortalamaları)

Item No	Student Related Learning Motivation Factors to Learn (Items of the Questionnaire)	Mean (M)
S16	Having every kind of family supports to your learning	4.28
S10	Believing that classes are very important and useful for your future	4.19
S2	Having interest to the content of learning subject	4.09
S18	Having a very eagerly personality to learn	4.02
S8	Believing that you are valuable for your teachers and friends	3.97
S20	Being very intelligent	3.92
S27	Being highly creative	3.85
S11	Systematically studying and having some learning targets	3.83
S9	Knowing that hard working is very important to pass a class	3.79
S13	Having temporarily psychological problems such as lack of moral, and stress	3.76
S17	Having a high expectancy to be successful	3.74
S5	Having some opportunities to determine yourself what you are going to learn	3.70
S12	Having temporarily physical health problems (being sleepy, having a headache)	3.63
S22	Having negative prejudges for the class	3.55
S21	Having a competition situation in learning	3.48
S19	Feeling yourself unsafe	3.46
S1	Feeling yourself sufficient about learning and ability level	3.41
S4	Having high anxiety level	3.39
S3	Having negative attitudes and prejudgments against instructor of the class	3.34
S15	Negativity of your social environment (both in school and out of school)	3.34
S33	Having close family members who have important problems	3.34
S23	Absolute necessity for note taking during the class time	3.27
S6	Being not satisfied the basic needs such as nutrition	3.20
S25	Having orientation difficulties to school and environment	3.12
S14	Having close friends whose learning motivation levels are very high	3.09
S35	Being in love with someone	3.07
S28	Having lack of communication skill	3.05
S34	Having negative relationships with the opposite sex	2.99
S30	Having deficit in economical conditions	2.81
S26	Taking private teaching supports	2.80
S32	Performing enough sportive activities	2.77
S24	Being interesting to instructor in an emotional way	2.73
S29	Being a need of getting attention	2.58
S7	Having some harmful habits	2.39
S31	Being jealous	2.38

Table 1 presents level of endorsements of students' own motivation. As it is given in Table 1, the five most important primarily student related motivating factors to learn are as follows: "Having every kind of family supports to your learning (M=4.28)", "Believing that classes are very important and useful for your future(M=4.19)", "Having interest to the content of learning subject(M=4.09)", "Having a very eagerly personality to

learn(M=4.02)", and "Believing that you are valuable for your instructors and friends (M=3.97)."

According to Table 1, most of the primarily student related factors were found important for students' motivation to learn. Only the last 8 factors' levels of importance were found less than middle for the subjects. These 8 factors, less important among the 35 primarily student related motivation factors to learn are as follows: "Having negative relationships with the opposite sex (M=2.99)", "Having deficit in economical conditions (M=2.81)", "Taking private teaching supports (M=2.80)", "Performing enough sportive activities (M=2.77)", "Being interesting to instructor in an emotional way (M=2.73)", "Being a need of getting attention (M=2.58)", "Having some harmful habits (M=2.39)", and "Being jealous (M=2.38)".

- **The level of Importance of Instructor Related Motivating Factors in Learning**

Items of primarily instructor related motivation factors to learn and their arithmetic means, in mean order (from highest to lowest) are given in Table 2, below.

Table 2. Primarily instructor related motivating factors and their arithmetic means, on 5 point (1 to 5) scale
(Tablo 2. Öğretmen merkezli güdülenmişlik faktörleri ve 5 üzerinden aritmetik ortalamaları)

Item No	Instructor Related Motivating Factors to Learn (Items of the Questionnaire)	Mean (M)
S45	Providing a warm learning atmosphere in class, and being tolerantly and joyfully	4.40
S43	Trying to make students feel that the instructor really cares about them	4.34
S42	Being a good model for high motivation in class and loving his job	4.32
S44	Being fair and not discriminating students	4.32
S48	Dominating the teaching subject, having sufficient knowledge on his profession	4.30
S39	Making fun of students, behaving roughly and given punishment to students	4.21
S37	Having sufficient communication skill	4.16
S69	Behaving unethically against students	4.15
S57	Framing the teaching subject with daily life	4.11
S51	Given encourage to students for being successful	4.11
S49	Providing positive feedbacks to students in learning progress	4.10
S64	Being sophisticated	4.09
S46	Using student centered teaching methods and making students to participate in the class	4.01
S40	Lack of providing discipline in class	3.92
S58	Having insufficient teaching ability	3.91
S52	Guiding students privately, and to have them make appropriate individual studies	3.90
S47	Informing students about teaching targets and the importance of the subject being thought	3.87
S62	Having consistent personality	3.85
S41	Providing cooperation with classmates and supporting group studies	3.84
S60	Given low grades	3.83
S56	Not using reinforcement sufficiently	3.82
S53	Making speeches to students to improve their general learning desire	3.80

S59	Lack of providing appropriate study materials to his students	3.80
S70	Having low empathy skill	3.80
S63	Using class time inefficiently	3.62
S71	Not being altruistic to his students	3.61
S68	Primarily considering economical gain in teaching	3.59
S50	Forcing students' potentials in classes	3.48
S66	Not being creative	3.47
S72	Reflecting his private life problems to the class	3.45
S38	Not having some principles	3.38
S36	Being antisocial	3.37
S65	Not being clean and well groomed	3.32
S55	Assigning very high grades and never failing a student	3.30
S61	Having very serious health problems	3.09
S54	Reflecting his political idea in classes	3.07
S67	Reflecting his economical deficits to his students	2.78

As it is given in Table 2, the five most important instructor related motivating factors to learn are as follows: "Providing a warm learning atmosphere in class, and being tolerantly and joyfully (M=4.40)", "Trying to make students feel that the instructor really cares about them (M=4.34)", "Being a good model for high motivation in class and loving his job (M=4.32)", "Being fair and not discriminating students (M=4.32)", and "Dominating the teaching subject, having sufficient knowledge on his profession (M=4.30)."

According to Table 2, all of the instructor related factors except one was found important for students' motivation to learn. Only the last factor's level of importance was found less important than normal for the subjects. This factor is "reflecting his economical deficits to his students (M=2.78)."

4. DISCUSSION (TARTIŞMA)

The aim of the current study was to investigate the students' perception about the importance of the learning motivating factors both student related and teacher related factors. This study maps out in a preliminary way what students see as important characteristics in the learner and in the instruction for learning.

The importance level of "being successful in their profession" was very high for subjects. Students' perception of "self-esteem level", "positiveness about life", "loving their major", and "importance of getting high grades" were high. Students' perceptions of "general motivation level to learn", "perseverance to learn", "quality of life standards that their university education will provide to them", "economical situations", and "beliefs of unnecessarily of hard working for classes" were in middle level. "Students' approximately study time for academic study in a week" was 2.00 hours, very low.

There were no significant differences between females and males on 3 factors, their self-esteem level, positiveness about life, and belief about quality of life standards that their university education will provide to them. There were significant differences on 8 factors of the 11 variables for females and males. All of these 8 significant differences between females and males on independent variables were in favor of female students. These 8 factors are as follows: "The level of importance of being successful in their profession", "Loving their major", "Importance of getting high grades for them", "General motivation level to learn", "Perseverance level to learn", "Economical situations", "belief of unnecessarily of hard working for

classes", "Students' approximately study time for academic study in a week." As a result of findings the perceptions of female students on these 8 independent variables related to motivation were higher than male subjects.

Results showed that the first 27 primarily student related factors out of 35 factors in Table 1, perceived as important in improving students' motivation to learn. It can be concluded that these 27 primarily student related factors should be treated as important factors for motivate students to learn. The last 8 primarily student related factors out of 35 factors in Table 1 are perceived not important for improving students' motivation to learn.

The first 36 primarily instructor related factors out of 37 factors in Table 2, perceived as important in improving students' motivation to learn. These 36 primarily instructor related factors should be treated as important factors for motivate students to learn. The last primarily student related factor in Table 2 is perceived not an important factor for improving students' motivation to learn.

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