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The Effects of University Students' School Climate on Their Motivation Levels

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between university students' school climate and their motivation levels. In this study, whether the school climate and motivation levels differ according to gender and year of study also been examined. The "School Climate Scale for University Students" and "Adult Motivation Scale" were applied to 322 participants aged between 18 and 40. Correlational survey model was used in this study. Pearson correlation coefficient was examined to investigate the relationship between school climate and motivation. The effects of university students' school climate on motivation were analyzed using the regression analysis technique. T-test and one-way analysis of variance technique were used to investigate whether the school climate and motivation differed according to gender and year of study. The findings showed that there was no significant difference between university students' school climate and motivation levels and gender. According to the other variable, the year of study, a significant difference was found in the dimensions of learning environment and communication, which were sub-dimensions of school climate. When the relationship between school climate and motivation levels of university students was examined, the findings showed that there was a positive significant relationship between school climate and its sub-dimensions and motivation and sub-dimensions. The findings obtained in this study suggest that school climate was a significant predictor of motivation.

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Keywords:¹

School climate, motivation, university students.

1. Introduction

Structures created by more than an individual to achieve a certain goal in the social structure are expressed as organizations. When the characteristics of organizations are considered, it can be said that responsibility and authority are distributed hierarchically and schools with a bureaucratic structure also have the feature of being an organization (Demirtaş, 1997). When the literature is examined, it can be seen that there are very different definitions of school climate and there is no consensus on a definition (Çalık & Kurt, 2010).

School climate is the relationship of all stakeholders, administrators, teachers, parents and students in the school and the feelings they develop as a result of this relationship (Kaplan & Geoffroy, 1990). According to Baykal (2007), the climate of a school can be expressed as the whole internal features that distinguish it from all other schools. According to Balcı (2014), who defines school climate as a lifestyle created by a school at the end of a specific process, school climate should actually be considered the personality of the school. The climate of a school is the same as an individual's personality. According to Loukas, Suzuki and Horton (2006),

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the multidimensional concept that includes the instructional, organizational, and interpersonal dimensions and determines the quality of the relationships in school is called school climate. According to Skiba and Peterson (2001), school climate is the emotions that teachers, students and other employees gain about the school environment over time. Hoy and Miskel (2010) stated that school climate is a concept experienced by all stakeholders of the school and related to how the stakeholders perceive the environment they are in.

Although there are many factors affecting school climate, the leading factors are the behaviors of administrators and teachers. In their study, Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1991) defined four types of school climate as a result of the behaviors of teachers and administrators. Table 1 shows the classification of these climate types.

Table 1. *School Climate Types*

		Principal Behaviors	
		Open	Closed
Teacher behaviors	Open	Open climate	Engaged climate
	Closed	Disengaged climate	Closed climate

Source: Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1991).

As can be seen in Table 1, four different school climate types occur in schools according to the open and closed behaviors of teachers and principals and their mutual interactions. In the “Open Climate” type in which the behaviors of both teachers and principals are open, teachers have sincere relationships with each other and principals have sincere relationships with teachers and the atmosphere is dominated by feelings of sincerity, trust, cooperation and respect. In the “Engaged Climate” type in which the behaviors of teachers are open while the behaviors of principals are closed, the school principal shows strict and authoritarian characteristics with ineffective leadership qualities, while teachers show high performance and efficiency. In the “Disengaged Climate” type in which the behaviors of teachers are closed and the behaviors of principals are open, while principals show effective leadership characteristics, teachers try to sabotage principals’ behaviors. Finally, in the “Closed Climate,” in which the behaviors of both teachers and principals are closed, principals are strict, authoritarian and intolerant, while teachers are indifferent, intolerant and suspicious of the administration (Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 1991).

1.1 Elements of School Climate

When the literature is reviewed, different elements are mentioned regarding what exactly school climate tries to explain. These are safety, education and relations.

Safety. The place where teachers and students feel physically, socially and emotionally free can be expressed as a safe school. Elements that make up the physical security dimension are associated with situations in which there are clear discipline rules set in schools; sanctions are applied for violations of rules and stakeholders of school feel physically safe. At this point, it is important to have clear attitudes set for violence. In social-emotional safety dimension, it is possible to speak of clear rules and sanctions to prevent situations, such as verbal abuse and aggression and for the violations of these. In ensuring the safety of a school, administrators, teachers, parents and students should act together. Ensuring all kinds of safety at school is extremely critical in terms of creating a positive school climate (Cohen et al., 2009; Çamur, 2006).

Education. There are different sub-dimensions that make up the education dimension, which is one of the elements that make up the school climate. The most important of these is the quality of education. What is meant to be expressed here is a teaching environment that is connected with real life and a teaching method in which different techniques and materials that arouse interest in students are used. Another sub-dimension is social-emotional development. At this point, in addition to teaching, teachers should also implement different practices that will ensure the students’ social and emotional development. Regarding the climate of effective schools, points, such as student-centeredness, positive environment, communication and rewards, can be mentioned (Özcan, 2019; Şenel & Buluç, 2016).

Relations. As in any organization that includes people, human relations are also significant in schools for the creation of an effective school climate. At this point, effective human relations are expected between all

stakeholders in the school, starting from inside the institution to the outside of the institution. Human relations should be emphatic, tolerant, transparent, respectful, relevant and trust oriented. The relations of the school with parents and especially the relations among administrators, teachers and students are important at this point. If schools want to create a healthy and effective school climate, they should keep strong relations with families and other circles, especially teachers, students, and other employees (Çınkır, 2004).

1.2. Characteristics of a Positive School Climate

School climate, which is the personality of the school in general, may have positive or negative characteristics and these characteristics have various effects on all the stakeholders in the school and on the school's performance. A positive school climate provides teachers to have more responsibility for their students and to show more efforts to increase students' success (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000) and students to be more successful (Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 1991), to develop positive relationships with their teachers, friends and other individuals in school, to obey school rules more, and the families to participate more in school (Blum, 2005).

Schools with a positive school climate are dominated by a climate in which students care about school life and play an active role in their learning. In these schools, rules are prepared by stakeholders and the reward system is about giving positive reinforcement rather than punishment. There is effective communication between administrators, teachers, other employees and students and administrators care about the needs of employees both in their professional life and their private life (Webb & Norton, 2009). According to Teddlie (2010), schools with a positive school climate have characteristics, such as the presence of discipline and rules, harmony among employees, high participation in school operations and fair distribution of tasks.

1.3. Motivation

Motivation, which was derived from 'movere' that means to move in Latin, is expressed as the power that activates the individual for a specific purpose in its most general definition. When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that the concept of motivation has more than one definition.

Motivation is defined as an inner power that directs individuals to a specific purpose (Palmer, 1993). Cüceloğlu (1992) argued that motivation is a very general term that encompasses interests, impulses and needs. Çolakoğlu (2009) defines motivation as an energy that cannot be directly observed needed by an individual to accomplish a task within its complex structure. Motivation is the functioning state of internal and external causes that direct the individual to act, that determine the intensity of this act and the energy that the individual will give to this act and ensure its continuity (Arık, 1996). To summarize, the concept of motivation is a concept that includes various internal and external causes and their functioning mechanisms that drive the individual to behavior, determine the energy and intensity level of behaviors, and direct and maintain behaviors.

Durmaz (2019) stated that motivation is grouped in two as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. If the cause of a behavior is an effect coming from the environment, it is extrinsic motivation, and if it is an effect coming from the individual himself/herself, then it is intrinsic motivation. Abilities, interests and curiosity of an individual can be given as examples of sources of intrinsic motivation, while environmental effects, such as punishment and the reward, can be shown as examples of sources of extrinsic motivation.

In schools where educational activities are carried out, teacher and students are the main actors. In schools where the human factor has a considerable significance, motivation levels of individuals may affect the quality of education. Motivation is associated with a large number of different factors. One of these factors is school climate. Providing motivation in schools, which are organizations due to the characteristics they have, is very important concerning school climate. A mutual relationship can be mentioned here. While high motivation is significant for a positive school climate, the resulting school climate can also be a key role in increasing motivation.

When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that there are some studies conducted on the relationship between school climate and motivation of teachers, administrators and especially secondary and high school students (Bakkal, 2019; Zehir & Özgenel, 2019; Sönmez, 2018; İdi, 2017; Selçuk, 2016; Alqahtani, 2015; Özkul, 2013; Argon & Ertürk, 2013; Gök, 2009). To our knowledge, no studies were found in which the relationship between school climate and motivation has been examined in university students. In the present study, the relationship between school climate and motivation was examined on university students.

This study aims to examine the relationship between school climate and motivation levels of the university students. In parallel with this purpose, answers were sought to the following research questions:

- 1- Do university students' school climate and motivation levels differ according to gender and year of study?
- 2- Is there a significant association between school climate and motivation levels?
- 3- Does school climate predict levels of motivation?

2. Method

2.1. Study Model

In this study, correlational survey model, which is one of the general survey models, was used. Correlational models are studies which aim to describe a situation that happened in the past and continues to exist today as it is. "Correlational Survey Model", which is one of the survey types, is a research model which aims to find out whether the change between two or more variables exists together or the degree of this change (Karasar, 2014).

2.2. Study Group

The study group consisted of 322 students. Distribution of the students in this study by their gender and year of study is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 2. *Distribution of the Students in this Study by Gender*

Gender	f	%
Female	223	69.3
Male	99	30.7
Total	322	100

When Table 2 is examined, it can be seen that 223 (69.3%) of the students in this study were female, while 99 (30.7%) were male.

Table 3. *Distribution of Students in This Study by the Year of Study*

Year of study	f	%
1	21	6.5
2	100	31.1
3	104	32.3
4	88	27.3
Postgraduate	9	2.8
Total	322	100

When Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that 21 (6.5%) were in their first year of their study, 100 (31.1%) were in their second year of their study, 104 (32.3%) were in their third year of their study, 88 (27.3%) were in their fourth year of their study, and nine (2.8%) were postgraduate students.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

In the present study, the data were obtained using "School Climate Scale for University Students" and "Adult Motivation Scale."

2.3.1. School Climate Scale for University Students. School Climate Scale for University Students was developed by Terzi (2015). As a result of the exploratory factor analysis of 35-item draft scale, a structure consisting of a total of 17 items and three sub-dimensions was obtained. The school climate scale consisted of the dimensions of commitment to school, communication and learning environment. The 17-item and 3-dimensional scale explains 56% of the total variance. Factor loads of the scale ranged between .46 and .76 and item-total correlations ranged between .34 and .60 for the three dimensions. In the tests performed for

reliability analysis, the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was $\alpha=.75$ for commitment to school dimension, as $\alpha=.86$ for communication dimension and as $\alpha=.81$ for learning environment dimension. Reliability was $\alpha=.90$ for the total scale. Reliability in this study was $\alpha=.94$ for the total scale.

2.3.2. Adult Motivation Scale. Adult Motivation Scale, which was developed by Tulunay Ateş and İhtiyaroğlu (2019), consists of 21 items and two factors. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, a two-dimensional structure explaining 47.95% of the total variance was obtained. According to the confirmatory factor analysis, fit indices of the model were calculated as GFI (0.85), CFI (0.96), NFI (0.91), RMSEA (0.06), CFI (0.96), AGFI (0.82) and SRMR (0.06). In this study, the Cronbach’s Alpha value was 0.92 for intrinsic motivation, 0.82 for extrinsic motivation and 0.94 for the total scale. A high score from the 5-Likert type scale means a high level of motivation. Reliability in this study was $\alpha=.89$ for the total scale.

2.4. Data Analysis

To use parametric tests in data analysis, the data must conform to a normal distribution and the variables must be homogenous. To determine the data analysis methods to be used in this study, the data were first examined concerning normality distribution. According to the normality assumption analyses conducted, the data were found to show the normal distribution and it was decided to use parametric tests in data analysis. For significant differences in the variables of the study, the independent samples t-test was used for variables with two groups, while independent samples. One-way ANOVA test was used for more than three groups. The associations between the variables were calculated using Pearson correlation. Regression analysis technique was used to find out the predictive power of university students’ motivation levels of school climate.

3. Findings

This part of the study included findings regarding the analyses made based on the problem situations determined regarding the aims of the study.

Analysis results of university students’ school climate and motivation levels by the variable of gender

Independent samples t-test was used to analyse whether school climate and motivation levels of university students differed by the variable of gender. The data are shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. The T-Test Results of School Climate Scale and Sub-Dimension Scores by Gender

Variables	Groups	N	X	ss	t-test		
					t	sd	p
School climate total	Female	223	3.22	.79	.38	163.30	.707
	Male	99	3.18	.93			
Commitment to School dimension	Female	223	2.94	1.00	-.13	188.46	.894
	Male	99	2.95	.99			
Communication dimension	Female	223	3.60	.87	1.11	162.72	.265
	Male	99	3.48	1.03			
Learning Environment dimension	Female	223	3.12	.84	.04	158.73	.962
	Male	99	3.11	1.03			

When Table 4 was examined, according to the t-test analysis results, it was found that school climate total and sub-dimension scores did not differ significantly by the variable of gender ($p>0.5$).

Table 5. The T-Test Results of Motivation Scale and Sub-Dimension Scores by Gender

Variables	Groups	N	X	ss	t-test		
					t	sd	p
Motivation total	Female	223	4.16	.42	.25	154.93	.799
	Male	99	4.14	.53			
Intrinsic motivation sub-dimension	Female	223	4.40	.48	1.00	171.80	.316
	Male	99	4.34	.54			
Extrinsic motivation sub-dimension	Female	223	3.92	.50	-.49	149.59	.624
	Male	99	3.95	.66			

As shown in Table 5, according to the t-test analysis results, motivation total and sub-dimension scores did not differ significantly by the variable of gender ($p>0.5$).

Analysis results of the university students' school climate and motivation levels by the variable of the year of study

One-way ANOVA test was used to examine whether university students' school climate and motivation levels differed by the variable of the year of study. The data obtained are shown in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6. ANOVA Results of School Climate Total and Sub-Dimensions Scores by the Variable of the Year of Study

	Year of study	N	X	Ss	Source of variance	KT	sd	KO	F	p	Sig.
School climate total	1st year	21	3.25	1.15	Intragroup	4.514	4	1.129	1,624	,168	-
	2nd year	100	3.17	0.80	between groups	220.345	317	.695			
	3rd year	104	3.28	0.84	Total	224.8860	321				
	4th year	88	3.10	0.78							
	Postgraduate	9	3.77	0.80							
Commitment to School dimension	1st year	21	2.90	1.28	Intragroup	4.369	4	1.092	1,093	.360	-
	2nd year	100	2.97	1.00	between groups	316.656	317	,999			
	3rd year	104	3.00	1.02	Total	321.024	321				
	4th year	88	2.82	0.91							
	Postgraduate	9	3.47	0.82							
Communication dimension	1st year	21	3.48	1.21	Intragroup	10.869	4	2.717	3,253	.012	1-5, 2-3, 2-4, 2-5
	2nd year	100	3.34	0.88	between groups	264.756	317	.835			
	3rd year	104	3.69	0.84	Total	275.624	321				
	4th year	88	3.63	0.94							
	Postgraduate	9	4.20	1.01							
Learning environment dimension	1st year	21	3.37	1.21	Intragroup	10.095	4	2.524	3,137	.015	1-4, 2-4, 3-4, 4-5
	2nd year	100	3.20	0.87	between groups	255.010	317	.804			
	3rd year	104	3.15	0.91	Total	265.105	321				
	4th year	88	2.86	0.83							
	Postgraduate	9	3.63	0.87							

As shown Table 6, a significant difference was found in the sub-dimensions of communication and learning environment by the year of study. While postgraduate students had the highest mean score and second-year students had the lowest mean score in the communication sub-dimension, postgraduate students had the highest mean score and fourth-year students had the lowest mean score in the learning environment sub-dimension.

Table 7. ANOVA Results of Motivation Scale Total and Sub-Dimensions Scores by the Variable of the Year of Study

	Year of study	N	X	Ss	Source of variance	KT	sd	KO	F	p	Sig.
Motivation total	1st year	21	4.15	0.80	Intragroup	1.555	4	.389	1,864	.116	-
	2nd year	100	4.17	0.39	between groups	66.104	317	.209			
	3rd year	104	4.06	0.49	Total	67.659	321				
	4th year	88	4.24	0.36							
	Postgraduate	9	4.20	0.36							
Intrinsic motivation sub-dimension	1st year	21	4.36	0.93	Intragroup	2.204	4	.551	2,199	.069	-
	2nd year	100	4.36	0.42	between groups	79.435	317	.251			
	3rd year	104	4.30	0.53	Total	81.639	321				
	4th year	88	4.51	0.38							
	Postgraduate	9	4.36	0.46							
Extrinsic motivation sub-dimension	1st year	21	3.95	0.76	Intragroup	1.720	4	.430	1,404	.232	-

2nd year	100	3.99	0.51	between groups	97.085	317	.306
3rd year	104	3.82	0.56	Total	98.805	321	
4th year	88	3.96	0.54				
Postgraduate	9	4.04	0.35				

As shown in Table 7, motivation scale total and sub-dimension scores did not differ significantly by the variable of the year of study ($p>0.5$).

Correlation results between university students’ school climate and motivation levels

Pearson Moments Correlation coefficient was used to examine the association between university students’ school climate and motivation levels and the results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Correlations between School Climate and Motivation Scales and Sub-Dimensions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. School climate total	1	.890*	.850*	.917*	.203*	.138*	.210*
2. Commitment to School		1	.588*	.759*	.231*	.172*	.226*
3. Communication			1	.683*	.160*	.111*	.165*
4. Learning environment				1	.142*	.079	.164*
5. Motivation Total					1	.853*	.880*
6. Intrinsic motivation						1	.502*
7. Extrinsic motivation							1

$p<0.01^*$

As shown in Table 8, it was concluded that there were significant associations between school climate total score and sub-dimension scores. Similarly, a significant association was found between motivation total score and sub-dimensions. When the associations between school climate and motivation were examined, a significant association was not found only between learning environment and intrinsic motivation, while the positive significant association was found between all other dimensions.

Regression analysis results regarding the effects of school climate on motivation levels in university students

Regression analysis was used to examine the effects of school climate on motivation levels in university students. The data obtained as a result of this study are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Regression Analysis Regarding the Effects of School Climate on Motivation Levels

Dependent variable	Dependent variable	B	Std. Error	(β)	t	p	R	R ²	F	p
School climate	Motivation	.111	.030	.203	3.700	0.00	.203	.041	13.687	0.00

As shown in Table 9, the school climate of university students predicted their motivation levels ($r^2=.041$; $p<.001$) significantly. It was indicated that school climate predicted 4% of the variable of motivation.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results obtained from this study, school climate and motivation levels of university students do not differ significantly concerning the variable of gender. Significant difference was found between the variable of the year of study and school climate scale sub-dimensions communication and learning environment. The motivation of university students did not differ significantly in terms of the variable of the year of study. Positive significant associations were found between university students’ school climate and

motivation scale total scores and sub-dimension scores of the scales. Finally, the effects of school climate on university students' motivation levels were examined and the findings showed that school climate predicted motivation level significantly.

When the literature is examined, it can be seen that there are studies supporting the results of the present study. As a result of Güneş's (2019) study, the findings showed that communication and learning environment sub-dimensions of school climate did not differ significantly concerning the variable of gender. As a result of the present study, it was found that communication and learning environment sub-dimensions of school climate differed significantly in terms of the variable of the year of study. While 4th-year students had the lowest mean in the sub-dimension of learning environment, 2nd-year students had the lowest mean in the sub-dimension of communication. Unlike the results of the present study, Özdemir, Çepni and İncedere (2020) found that school climate levels of associate degree students decreased as their year of study increased.

When the studies which examined the association of school climate with different variables were examined, the samples of studies were mostly school principals (Sönmez, 2018; Alqahtani, 2015), teachers (Selçuk, 2016; İdi, 2017) and secondary school students (Dönmez & Taylı, 2018; Bahçetepe & Giorgetti, 2015). In the present study, university students were chosen as the study group. To our knowledge, no studies were found in literature in which the association between school climate and motivation was examined in university students; however, the association between school climate and motivation was examined in different study groups.

In the study conducted by Selçuk (2016) on teachers, a positive significant association was found between positive school climates and motivation. Similarly, it was found in Argon and Ertürk's (2013) study that as teachers' intrinsic motivation increased, their organizational identity perceptions also increased. According to the results of İdi's (2011) study on the organizational climate of teachers, a positive significant association was found between organizational climate and motivation. In Sönmez's (2018) study on school principals, the findings showed that the motivational language used by school principals was a significant predictor of school climate. Similarly, Alqahtani's (2015) study showed that the motivational language used by school principals had a significant effect on school climate. The findings obtained in the present study showed that a positive significant association was found between university students' school climate and motivation levels. It can be seen that the results of the present study are in parallel with the studies in the literature.

Few studies were found in literature which examined school climate on university students. In Güneş's (2019) study, a positive significant association was found between prospective teachers' school climate and attitudes towards the profession of teaching. In Özdemir, Çepni and İncedere's (2020) study, the findings showed that associate degree students had moderate levels of school climate perceptions. When the sub-dimensions were examined, associate degree students were sufficient in terms of learning environment and communication, while they were insufficient concerning commitment to school. It can be said that the results of the present study are consistent with the studies in the literature.

The following recommendations were made according to the results obtained from this study.

- In the present study, the association between school climate and motivation level was limited to university students. In future studies, the association between school climate and motivation levels can be examined in different sample groups.
- When the positive association between university students' school climate and motivation levels is considered, studies should be planned to increase the school climate of university students.
- In further studies, more in-depth analysis can be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques together.

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