



Academic Responsibility of University Students According to Gender: The Role of Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the degree at which self-esteem and life satisfaction predict the academic responsibility behavior of university students, with regards to gender. The sample of the study consists of 407 (247 female and 160 male) undergraduate students studying at Mersin University in the 2016-2017 academic year. In this study, "Personal Information Form", and three measuring tools, namely, "Academic Responsibility Scale" developed by Akbay, Çapri and Gündüz (2013), "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Short Form)" developed by Rosenberg (1965) and adapted to Turkish by Çuhadaroğlu (1986), and "Life Satisfaction Scale" developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) and adapted to Turkish by Köker (1991), were used. Multiple and stepwise regression analysis methods were used in the analysis of the data. All data were tested at a 0.05 significance level. According to the results of the regression analysis for the total sample and the female/male sample group, self-esteem and life satisfaction significantly predicted the academic responsibility behavior of university students. The findings obtained were discussed and some suggestions were made for future studies.

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Keywords:

Academic responsibility, self-esteem, life satisfaction, regression.

Introduction

The missions of universities increase with diversification as the society changes. These missions include helping students to grasp the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities to become responsible individuals. University students may face more responsibility in order to sustain their lives in the desired direction in a personal, social and academic context. Therefore, as individuals step into university life, the necessity of change in many vital issues becomes evident. One of the most important features that distinguish university institutions from other educational institutions is that the student has a large share of the

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responsibility for achieving academic goals. While the task of preparing the necessary educational environments and conditions falls on these institutions, the decision of how and to what extent to benefit from these services is at the discretion of the student. The quality of the outcomes of the process of acquiring a profession has an important place both for the individual and the society. The fulfillment of the responsibilities is among the most important factors for individuals, and therefore educational institutions, in order to achieve success. Yalom (1999) defined the responsible individual as a person who respects themselves and others, performs their duties in time, does not want to be an unnecessary burden to others and takes care of their own business, is aware of their eigenvalue and holds themselves responsible for everything related to them. Academic responsibility, which we can define as a subtype of the concept of responsibility, is defined as the internal motivation of students to define the tasks they have undertaken in the academic environment, to describe themselves academically and to fulfill their duties in the academic platform on time (Akbay, Çapri and Gündüz, 2013). Zimmerman (2006), on the other hand, defines academic responsibility as students' acceptance of accountability for their success and failure at school, and emphasizes that there is a widespread demand that students should be encouraged to demonstrate academic responsibility and that they should be encouraged to demonstrate this desired personal quality both inside and outside the classroom. Responsibility has been defined lexically as "accountability for actions and their consequences", and academic responsibility refers to students' acceptance of accountability for their success and failures in school (Zimmerman, 2006). Based on these definitions, it can be said that the behavior of taking academic responsibility will have a significant impact on academic outcomes (Zimmerman and Kitsantas, 2005). Students with low academic responsibility behavior can fail in term classes, prolong their education, move away from school and fail to create a qualified human profile that is important to society. Therefore, these problems can create serious problems for both the individual and the society. Most current "responsibility" education programs focus mainly on character and deportment rather than on academic independence and personal shouldering of the responsibility for learning. However, there have been important discoveries in recent years regarding the nature and role of the key process and beliefs underlying students' development of personal responsibilities, such as attributions of personal causality, self-efficacy beliefs and the development of self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2006).

When the literature is analyzed and obstacles to student achievement at the university are observed, academic responsibility can be said to be a very important problem. Although the concept of academic responsibility is one of the concepts at the center of student life, little data has been found in the literature on academic responsibility (Warton, 2001). In their study, Çapri, Gündüz and Akbay (2017) stated that there is a negative relationship between academic responsibility and academic procrastination and a positive relationship between work integration. In other words, the students claim that they take more academic responsibility as they find the task they undertake academically meaningful, and decrease their academic procrastination behaviors. Akbay, Aktaş, and Yalçın-İncik (2016) reported in their study that there was a positive relationship between academic responsibility and academic motivation, academic self-efficacy and perceived self-regulation. In another study, Çelikkaleli and Akbay (2013) stated that there is a negative relationship between university students' responsibilities towards themselves and others, and academic procrastination behaviors and a positive relationship between their beliefs in their own competency. In addition to these findings, they reported that women take more responsibility towards themselves when compared to male students.

Self-esteem, which is one of the variables discussed in this study, is defined as the thoughts and feelings of the individual about their own value and importance (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem reflects the individual's perceptions and evaluations about themselves (Civitci and Civitci, 2009). Self-esteem affects happiness and satisfaction in life and is developed through an individual's life experiences; it is not realistic to think that self-esteem can be taught (Blascovich, Tomaka, 1993).

People with low self-esteem tend to make upward comparisons, as stated in the self-fulfilling prophecy (Vohs, 2004), as they are dissatisfied with themselves, therefore strengthening their low self-esteem. Self-esteem is at the bottom of self-fulfillment in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Two of the characteristics of the self-actualizing individual are life satisfaction and taking responsibility. Increased self-esteem of individuals enables them to get more satisfaction from their experiences and thus take more responsibility for the tasks they undertake. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to either refuse or minimize their responsibilities in their achievements, meaning that their belief that they can achieve a situation by themselves is rather weak (Marecek and Mettee, 1972). In addition to this, not having an optimistic point of view about their success at the end of the process may lead to a lack of motivation regarding the responsibility they will take during the process (Weiner, 1985; Dweck, 1986; Seifert, 1997). Based on this idea, we may encounter a situation where individuals with low self-esteem may refrain from taking academic responsibility as a predictable result. Research shows that boys have a higher self-esteem than girls (Moksnes, Moljord, Espnes, and Byrne, 2010; Derdikman-Eiron, Indredavik, Bratberg, Taraldsen, Bakken, and Colton, 2011; Moksnes and Espnes, 2013).

Another variable within the scope of this research is life satisfaction. Pavot and Diener (1993) define life satisfaction as a judicial process in which individuals evaluate their quality of life according to their unique criteria. Life satisfaction involves an individual's assessment of their life as a whole, including different living spaces, especially school, family and friends (Civitci and Civitci, 2009). Therefore, the assessment of life satisfaction can be expressed as a cognitive assessment of a person's quality of life based on self-selected standards. Life satisfaction also affects the individual's willingness to achieve their goals. In addition, life satisfaction enables the individual to feel that they are in control of their life (Dağlı and Baysal, 2016). Optimistic perspectives on life affect individuals' success positively (Cheng and Furnham, 2002; Huebner, 1991; Huebner and Alderman, 1993; Seligman, 1990; Aydın and Tezer, 1991). The person who manages to be happy can be motivated to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Some research shows that university students tend to take more responsibility as their satisfaction with life increases (Bailey and Miller, 1998). Changing living conditions bring about some incompatibility problems in individuals. These incompatibility problems can prevent individuals from fulfilling their duties and responsibilities that they have undertaken, as they reduce life satisfaction (Mcknight et al. 2002). Individuals with high satisfaction are more motivated to take responsibility in the work environment (Rama-Macerias, Parente and Kranke, 2012). Research shows that when students are satisfied with their lives, they do not procrastinate in their academic life, that is, satisfaction with life makes it easier to take responsibility for academic tasks (Binder, 2000; Alexander and Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Savithri, 2014). The trend in research that examines whether life satisfaction differs by gender is that men have higher levels of life satisfaction than women (Goldbeck, Schmitz, Besier, Herschbach, and Henrich, 2007; Moksnes, Løhre, and Espnes, 2012; Moksnes and Espnes, 2013).

Although academic responsibility is a very important concept in university life, it is seen that there are not enough studies on the subject in the literature. Putting out the variables that predict academic responsibility behavior is very important in understanding this concept. In this study, it is thought to be related to academic procrastination; self-esteem and life satisfaction variables were studied.

The purpose of this study is to examine the degree at which self-esteem and life satisfaction predict the academic responsibility behavior of university students, with regards to gender. For this purpose, answers to the following questions are sought:

1. Do the self-esteem and life satisfaction of students studying at the university predict their academic responsibility levels?
2. What is the power of the self-esteem and life satisfaction variables of students studying at the university to predict their academic responsibility behavior?

3. Do the self-esteem and life satisfaction of female/male students studying at the university predict their academic responsibility levels?

4. What is the power of the self-esteem and life satisfaction variables of female/male students studying at the university to predict their academic responsibility behavior?

Method

Research Method

In this study, descriptive research model was used to present descriptive statistics for variables. And relational research model was used to examine the relationships between variables.

Sample / Working Group

The sampling method, which can be found easily (Convenience Sampling) (Erkuş, 2011), was used when creating the working group. The study group of this research is consisted of 407 (247 female and 160 male) undergraduate students studying at Faculty of Education, at Mersin University in the spring semester of 2016-2017 academic year. The age range of the group is between 17 and 26 (average = 20.20).

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form. In order to define the study group and collect data regarding the independent variables of the study, a Personal Information Form prepared by the researchers was used.

Academic Responsibility Scale. The Academic Responsibility Scale (ARS), which is used to determine the academic responsibility levels of individuals, is a 4-point Likert-type scale developed by Akbay, Çapri and Gündüz (2013). The scale consists of 25 items and has a 5-factor structure. In order to examine the criterion validity, the factor scores of the scale and the correlations between the adjusted total scores were calculated, and the correlation between the factors' total test score was quite high, and the correlation coefficients among the factors were moderate and significant. It was concluded that while the scale can be used with five factors, it is also a scale suitable for single factor use. As the score obtained from the scale increases, it is interpreted that the level of academic responsibility also increases. Akbay, Çapri and Gündüz (2013) reported the Cronbach α coefficient of the entire scale as .91. Within the scope of this study, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be .92 for the whole scale.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Short Form), which was developed by Rosenberg (1965) and translated to Turkish by Çuhadaroğlu (1986), was used in order to determine the perceptions of individuals about their self-worth. The scale consists of five positive and five negative items for a total of 10 items and it is a 4-point Likert-type scale. The lowest score that can be obtained from the measurement tool is 10 and the highest score is 40. A high score from the measuring tool indicates a high self-esteem. Çuhadaroğlu (1986), who performed the adaptation study of the scale, reported that the scale had a Cronbach α coefficient of .76. In this study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was .74.

Satisfaction with Life Scale. The Life Satisfaction Scale, developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) and translated into Turkish by Köker (1991), was used to determine how individuals evaluate their lives in general and their overall life satisfaction. The scale consisting of five positive items is a scale that is answered by using a seven-point Likert type (1 = "Strongly Disagree" - 7 = "Strongly Agree") ratings. A high score obtained from the measurement tool can be interpreted as the individual perceiving their life as satisfying. Köker (1991), who made the adaptation study of the scale, determined the test-retest reliability coefficient of the measuring tool as .71. In this study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was .88.

Process

The data obtained from the research were collected in the spring semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. Necessary permissions were obtained from the relevant instructors before the application. The application was carried out in the classroom and data was collected only from volunteer students. Before the application, students were given basic information about the purpose of the research and measurement tools, and explanations were made about the measurement tools. The application took approximately fifteen minutes.

Data Analysis

Before the analysis of the data, the necessary numbers for multiple regression analysis were reviewed. Firstly, it was checked whether the scores obtained from all measurement tools showed normal distribution, then scatter diagram was examined and the presence of a linear relationship between predictive variables (self-esteem and life satisfaction) and predicted variable (academic responsibility) was checked. As a result of these controls, it was seen that the relevant assumptions were met. In the next step, considering the Mahanobis distances, Pearson Correlation Coefficients between variables were calculated. Then, in order to determine the degree of self-esteem and life satisfaction levels of students to predict their academic responsibility levels, progressive regression analysis was conducted separately for the sample group for women and men, as well as for the entire study group. In the research, .05 value was used as the upper limit of error margin.

Findings

Total Sample

Pearson correlation coefficients and some descriptive statistics obtained from the scales for 407 university students forming the study group are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Inter-Variable Pearson Correlation Coefficients and Some Descriptive Statistics for the Research Group

	1	2	3
1. Academic Responsibility	-		
2. Self-esteem	.46(**)	-	
3. Life Satisfaction	.44(**)	.61(**)	-
Arithmetic mean	50.49	32.20	21.06
Ss	11.13	4.91	6.95

n=407 * p<.05 ** p<.001

When Table 1 is analyzed, moderately and positive correlation was found between the academic responsibility levels of the study group and their self-esteem (r = .46, p <.001) and life satisfaction (r = .44, p <.001). This finding can be interpreted as the academic responsibilities of university students increasing as their self-esteem and life satisfaction increase. When the relations between self-esteem and life satisfaction are examined (r = .61, p <.001), it is seen that there is a high level of significant and positive relationship between them.

The progressive regression analysis findings regarding self-esteem and life satisfaction, which are considered to be the predictors of academic responsibility for the working group, are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Progressive Regression Analysis Concerning Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction as Predictors of Academic Responsibility for the Study Group

Model	Variables	B	SH _B	β	t	R	R ²	F	p
1	Constant	43.96	3.90	-	11.29	.46	.22	113.69	.000
	Self-esteem	.56	.05	.46	10.66				

	Constant	35.74	4.16	-	8.59				
2	Self-esteem	.37	.06	.31	5.78	.51	.26	71.50	.000
	Life Satisfaction	.36	.07	.26	4.82				

*p<.01

As seen in Table 2, when standardized regression coefficients (β) are examined, it is seen that individuals' self-esteem ($\beta = .31$) and life satisfaction ($\beta = .26$) respectively predicted academic responsibility behaviors ($F(2-416) = 71.50, p < .001$). In the light of these findings, self-esteem predicting the academic responsibility levels of university students at the highest level alone explains 22% of the total variance. Self-esteem and life satisfaction together explain 26% of academic responsibility behavior ($R = .51, R^2 = .26$).

Male Sample Group

When the correlation coefficients between variables calculated for 160 male students in the study group are analyzed (Table 3), it is seen that they show similar results to the results obtained from the whole study group.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients Between Variables and Some Descriptive Statistics For Male Sample Group

	1	2	3
1. Academic Responsibility	-		
2. Self-esteem	.46(**)	-	
3. Life Satisfaction	.41(**)	.54(**)	-
Arithmetic mean	54.31	32.10	22.12
Ss	10.17	4.89	7.01

* p<.05 ** p<.001

As seen in Table 3, there is seen to be a moderately and positive significant relationship between the academic responsibility levels of male students in the study group and their self-esteem ($r = .46, p < .001$) and life satisfaction ($r = .41, p < .001$). In the light of these findings, it can be said that as the self-esteem and life satisfaction of male students increase, their academic responsibility behavior also increases. When the relations between self-esteem and life satisfaction were examined ($r = .54, p < .001$), it was found that there was moderately positive and significant relationship.

Stepwise regression analysis results related to self-esteem and life satisfaction, which are determined as predictors of academic responsibility for male students, are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Progressive Regression Analysis Concerning Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction as Predictors of Academic Responsibility for the Male Sample Group

Model	Variables	B	SH _B	β	t	R	R ²	F	p
1	Constant	41.89	6.65	-	6.30	.46	.21	42.46	.000
	Self-esteem	.59	.09	.46	6.52				
2	Constant	34.84	7.02	-	4.96	.50	.25	25.77	.007
	Self-esteem	.43	.11	.34	4.13				
	Life Satisfaction	.30	.11	.22	2.71				

*p<.01

When Table 4 is examined, considering the standardized regression coefficients (β), it is seen that self-esteem ($\beta = .34$) and life satisfaction ($\beta = .22$) significantly predicted academic responsibility behavior of male university students ($F(2-159) = 25.77, p < .001$). According to these findings, self-esteem, which predicts academic responsibility behavior at the highest level, explains 21% of the total variance alone. When self-

esteem and life satisfaction are considered together, they explain 25% of academic responsibility behavior ($R = .50, R^2 = .25$).

Female Sample Group

When the correlation coefficients between variables calculated for 247 male students in the study group are analyzed (Table 5), it is seen that they show similar results to the results obtained from the whole study group and the male study group.

Table 5. Correlation Coefficients Between Variables and Some Descriptive Statistics for Female Sample Group

	1	2	3
1. Academic Responsibility	-		
2. Self-esteem	.45(**)	-	
3. Life Satisfaction	.49(**)	.65(**)	-
Arithmetic mean	52.32	30.30	23.40
Ss	11.19	4.75	7.20

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

When Table 5 is analyzed, it is seen that there is moderately and positive relationship between the academic responsibility levels of the female sample group and self-esteem ($r = .45, p < .001$) and life satisfaction ($r = .49, p < .001$). In the light of these findings, it is seen that as the self-esteem and life satisfaction of female university students increase, their academic responsibility behaviors increase. When the relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem was examined, it was found that there was a high level of positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction ($r = .65, p < .001$).

Stepwise regression analysis results related to self-esteem and life satisfaction, which are determined as predictors of academic responsibility for female students, are given in Table 6. The findings in this table differ from the findings obtained from the total study group and the male sample group. Considering the findings obtained from the total study group and the sample group of male students, it was found that the strongest variable predicting academic responsibility behavior was self-esteem, whereas in the female sample group it was found to be life satisfaction.

Table 6. Progressive Regression Analysis Concerning Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction as Predictors of Academic Responsibility for the Female Sample Group

Model	Variables	B	SH _B	β	t	R	R ²	F	p
1	Constant	42.76	4.95	-	8.64	.49	.24	75.57	.000
	Self-esteem	.69	.08	.49	8.69				
2	Constant	35.66	5.30	-	6.73	.52	.27	44.87	.000
	Self-esteem	.47	.10	.31	4.61				
	Life Satisfaction	.28	.08	.24	3.33				

* $p < .01$

When standardized regression coefficients (β) in Table 6 are examined, it is seen that life satisfaction ($\beta = .31$) and self-esteem ($\beta = .24$) significantly predicted academic responsibility behavior of female university students ($F(2-246) = 44.87, p < .001$). According to the findings, life satisfaction alone explains 24% of the total variance as the strongest variable predicting the level of academic responsibility among female university students. It is seen that life satisfaction and self-esteem explain 27% of academic responsibility behavior together ($R = .52, R^2 = .27$).

Discussion / Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the findings, it is seen that self-esteem and life satisfaction predict academic responsibility behavior significantly in both the total sample group and the male and female sample groups. While self-esteem is the strongest variable predicting academic responsibility behavior in the sampling findings of the total sample and male students, the strongest variable predicting academic responsibility behavior in the female sample group is life satisfaction. Based on the finding that the variables of academic responsibility, self-esteem and life satisfaction have similar statistics in women, men, and the total sample, the findings obtained were discussed on a common basis. It is seen that the variables of self-esteem and life satisfaction together explain the academic responsibility behavior of 26% of the total sample group, 25% of the male sample group and 27% of the female sample group. The findings show that as the self-esteem and life satisfaction of university students increase, their academic responsibility behavior also increases.

The positive beliefs and perceptions of the individual affect their behavioral tendencies. The fact that the individual's perception towards themselves is also an important condition in demonstrating academic responsibility behavior, reveals the necessity of an internal motivation. When the researches are examined, the strong beliefs of individuals with high self-esteem that they can fulfill the responsibility for a task they should undertake, increase their tendency to take on responsibility (Marecek and Mettee, 1972). In addition, having an optimistic point of view about the success they will achieve at the end of the process also enables them to increase their motivation and exhibit responsible behaviors (Weiner, 1985; Dweck, 1986; Seifert, 1997). Findings supporting conducted researches have been obtained within the scope of this research.

It is seen that the satisfaction of life (Civitci and Civitci, 2009), which includes the evaluation of individuals in many living areas, including the school, also affects the individual's willingness to achieve their goals. Satisfaction of an individual from school life also increases their motivation towards academic affairs. The success of the individual, who has a high life satisfaction, that is, a more optimistic view of life, is also positively affected (Cheng and Furnham, 2002; Huebner, 1991; Huebner and Alderman, 1993; Seligman, 1990; Aydın and Tezer, 1991). In addition, the increase in life satisfaction leads individuals to retain control in their lives and thus take on more responsibility (Dağlı and Baysal, 2016). The conducted research also supports the results obtained in this study. According to the findings of this study, university students tend to take more responsibility as their satisfaction with life increases (Bailey and Miller, 1998; Binder, 2000; Alexander and Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Savithri, 2014). In another study, it was found that the incompatibility problems that occur with the change in the life conditions of the individual decrease their life satisfaction, and they cannot fulfill the duties and responsibilities they have undertaken with this decrease in their life satisfaction (Mcknight, Choudhury, and Kacmar, 2002).

In general, an individual having a positive perspective on both themselves and their life areas increases their inner motivation and increases their belief that they can achieve something. This positive and optimistic view of the individual enables them to be able to take more responsibility in the academic context.

Consequently, in the light of the findings obtained in this study, it is important to plan various preventive and developmental studies that increase the tendency of university students' academic responsibility behavior, support their self-esteem and help them develop an optimistic perspective regarding their living spaces. University life brings together a life that is very different from other education levels and requires more responsibility to be carried as a burden. It is thought that, for university students who are likely to have difficulty in adapting to new conditions, especially in the first period of their university life, studies that will facilitate their adaptation to new and difficult conditions will prevent these students from experiencing a decrease in their satisfaction with life. Creating an institutional culture that supports the student's taking responsibility in the academic context for the conduct of their academic affairs, by the university administration and faculty members, will support the student's tendency to take responsibility

positively. Additionally, receiving more detailed personal feedback on the subjects that the student shows success and failure in university life will enable the student to make more realistic plans in an academic sense. Various group guidance activities, individual or group psychological counseling services can be offered by the PCG centers of universities to increase students' academic responsibilities, self-esteem and life satisfaction.

In this study, a limited number of variables (self-esteem and life satisfaction), which are thought to predict the tendency of academic responsibility behavior of university students, were studied within the scope of the related literature. In future researches, studies can be carried out with other variables that are thought to explain the concept of academic responsibility, which is thought to be an important variable.

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