Three Different Types of Elementary School Students’ School Achievements, Perceived Social Support, School Attitudes and Behavior-Adjustment Problems*

Leyla AK**, Melike SAYIL***

Abstract

The aim of this research was two fold. First is to compare three different types of primary schools (i.e., boarding primary, bussing primary, and regular) students’ behavior-adjustment problems and second is to investigate the environmental and psychological predictors of these students’ school success. The sample of the study consisted of 438 students of whom 203 were females (M age = 11.24) and 235 were males (M age = 11.46), recruited from the primary and secondary levels of eight years of compulsory education. Results showed that especially the primary level boarding school students’ total adjustment scores were lower ($S(2, 425) = 2.93$, $p < .05$) and their problem behaviors (internalizing ($S(2, 425) = 4.13$, $p < .05$), externalizing ($S(2, 425) = 4.03$, $p < .05$) and total ($S(2, 425) = 12.42$, $p < .05$)) were higher than those of the secondary level boarding school students. However there were no significant differences among the levels in bussing school. Grade level ($F(5, 242) = 4.61$, $p < .05$), family structure (living together, separated, and divorced) ($F(5, 242) = 4.61$, $p < .05$), attitudes towards school ($F(10, 242) = 4.64$, $p < .05$), perceived family support ($F(10, 242) = 4.64$, $p < .05$), total adjustment ($F(14, 242) = 13.55$, $p < .05$), internalizing ($F(14, 242) = 13.55$, $p < .05$), externalizing ($F(14, 242) = 13.55$, $p < .05$) and total problem scores ($F(14, 242) = 13.55$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted the students’ school achievements. The results indicated that boarding school students were the most disadvantaged group among the others in terms of behavior problems, social support, and school adjustment. However they seem to cope with these disadvantageous conditions and attain their counterparts’ school success under supportive conditions.

Key Words

Elementary School, Boarding School, Bussing School, Behavior-Adjustment Problems, School Achievement.

* This research is a part of first author’s Master Thesis.

** Correspondence: Leyla AK, Ali Naili Erdem Anatolian High School, Department of Psychologic Counseling and Guidance, 06000 Mamak-Ankara, Turkey. E-Mail: m_leylak@yahoo.com.tr
*** Assoc. Prof. Dr., Hacettepe University Faculty of Literature, Department of Psychology 06800 Beytepe/Ankara. E-Mail: mekmel@hacettepe.edu.tr
With the implementation of eight years of compulsory education law, families from rural areas or families living in poverty started preferring boarding or bussing elementary schools for their children. These children who are living away from their families for education are protected by the state. There are 299 boarding schools with approximately 142,788 students and 6337 bussing schools with approximately 698,061 students (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2005). Even though these schools have a big share in the education system; unfortunately, there are only few studies that have been focusing in these schools or the students. In these rare studies, findings revealed that boarding (Art, 2000; Güven, 1995) and bussing school (Altunsaray, 1996) students are not happy with the conditions of their schools. They think that physical resources of these schools are insufficient and they feel anxious about their future. The literature reveals that children separated from their families to get education have insufficient social support sources and negative attitudes towards schools. All of these negative factors have an impact on students’ school achievements and adjustments (Kuperminc, Leadbeater, & Blatt, 2001; Levitt, Guacci-Franco & Levitt, 1994; Marchand, Poulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001; Wentzel, 1997).

One of the most important aims of these schools is to support the children coming from lower socio-economic levels and help them to get a qualified education. It has been found that children growing up in poverty have lower academic success (Dubow & Ippolita, 1994; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Pungello, Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1996).

In this research, elementary school students who attend at boarding, bussing, or regular schools were compared with regard to their total adjustments and behavior problems. Predictors of school success were also investigated. More specifically, the following questions were answered.

1. Is there any difference among these schools in terms of student behavior-adjustment problems?

2. What are the environmental and psychological predictors of students’ achievements in three types of school settlements?
Method

Sample
438 students (203 female, 235 male) participated in the research. The ages of the participants ranged from 9 to 14 years old. Students were recruited from primary (3rd-5th grades) and secondary (6th - 8th grades) levels of boarding elementary school (n = 83); bussing primary school (n = 175) and a regular elementary school (n = 180) in a rural area in Ankara. The population of this study includes all the rural elementary, boarding, and bussing schools in Ankara.

Measures
The Teacher Report Form for Children and Youth, developed by Achenbach and Edelbrook (cited in Erol & Şimşek, 1998) was used to measure behavior and adjustment problems. The Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescents (Harter, 1985) was used to gather information about social support sources. The School Attitude Scale (Coskun, 2004) was used to assess children’s attitudes towards school. All of these scales were psychometrically reliable and valid. A demographic information form has been developed to collect information about subjects’ family structures. Children’s school achievement reports were obtained from their schools records.

Procedures
The scales were administered by the first author in a single session and administration was carried out in groups. Teachers completed the teacher report form individually and then returned them in a week to the investigator. All teacher forms were returned.

Results
In order to answer the first question, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANCOVA) was carried out by controlling for the age variable. Results revealed that the type of school (i.e., boarding, bussing, regular) (F_{12, 840} = 5.13; p < .05, Eta^2 = .07), school level (primary versus secondary) (F_{6, 420} = 6.34; p < .05, Eta^2 = .08), and gender (F_{6, 420} = 4.91; p < .05, Eta^2 = .07) had main effects on behavior-
adjustment problems. A school type of and school level interaction was also observed ($F_{12, 840} = 5.87; p < .05, \eta^2 = .08$). Further analysis of variance (ANOVA) results showed a significant gender effect. Girls received higher scores than boys on total adjustment. Boys were found to be more problematic with regard to externalizing and total problems.

The interaction effect revealed that in primary level boarding school students’ total adjustment scores were lower and their problem behaviors (i.e., internalizing, externalizing, total problem) were higher than those of secondary level, bussing and regular boarding school students. However, there were no significant differences between the levels in the bussing school. In the regular school, primary level students’ internalizing, externalizing, and total problem scores were significantly higher than those of the secondary level students (see Fig. 1).

The answer for the second question was determined by hierarchical regression analyses. As shown in Table 3, in the first model, grade level ($F_{5, 242} = 4.6; p < .05$) and family condition (living together, separated, divorced) ($F_{5, 24} = 4.6; p < .05$); in the second model, grade level ($F_{10, 24} = 4.64; p < .05$), attitudes towards school ($F_{10, 242} = 4.64; p < .05$) and parental support ($F_{10, 242} = 4.64; p < .05$); in the third model, grade level ($F_{14, 242} = 13.55; p < .05$), parental support ($F_{14, 242} = 13.55; p < .05$), total adjustment ($F_{14, 242} = 13.55; p < .05$), internalizing ($F_{14, 242} = 13.55; p < .05$), externalizing ($F_{14, 242} = 13.55; p < .05$), and total problem scores ($F_{14, 242} = 13.55; p < .05$) significantly predicted the school achievement.

Discussion

According to the teachers’ evaluations, behavior-adjustment problems were changed with both school setting and level. In the boarding school, primary level students with very low levels of total adjustment scores including school success caught up with the students from the other school settings in secondary level. The same was true for internalizing, externalizing, and total problem scores which were lowered at the secondary level, becoming quite similar with the others.

Our data revealed that girls have higher adjustment and boys have higher externalizing and problem behavior levels. These results
were consistent with the literature (e.g., Erol & Şimşek, 1998; Keiley, Bates, Dodge, & Petit, 2000; Verhulst et al., 2003). It should be noted that internalizing and externalizing behaviors did not reach at a clinical level in any of these schools.

The second level students’ school achievements were predicted by the grade, the scores of family togetherness, attitudes towards school, family support, total adjustment, internalizing, externalizing, and total problem. Family togetherness positively predicted school achievement, being similar with other findings (Liu et al., 2000; Marchand et al., 2001). Students who possessed positive attitudes towards their schools were also found to be more successful, as in line with the literature (Birch & Ladd cited in Gumora & Arsenio, 2002; Marchand et al., 2001; Rutter, 1983). Social support perceived from parents was associated with school achievement as found by Petit, Bates and Dodge (1997). Problem behaviors were negatively related with school achievement, being parallel with the other findings (Wentzel, 1991; Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997). However, internalizing and externalizing problems were found to be positively related with achievement in contrast with the other findings (Hakbilen, 1984; Pettit et al., 1997; Wentzel, 1991). Our findings might be explained by our students’ lower internalizing and externalizing scores when compared with urban and clinical samples. Coming from lower socio-economic levels and rural areas and being far away from their families in order to attend school seem to have lot of disadvantages. However, our results suggested that children overcome these difficulties mostly by themselves in few years. Therefore, it seems that psychological services for these children might facilitate the adjustment processes. The curriculum and school environment for these students should be arranged and improved in the direction of supporting the healthy development and character constitution as a competent adult citizen. Studies about boarding and bussing school systems are very limited; therefore, we hope that this research can be a first step to stimulate further research on these school settlements in order to provide better educational contexts for the students attending these schools.
Kaynakça/References


Eğitim ve Bilim, 19 (38), 12-19.


