

## Examining High School Students' Academic Amotivation

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### Abstract

This research aimed to examine the academic amotivation of high school students. To that end, the academic amotivation levels of high school students were determined, and their amotivation levels were compared according to some demographic variables. The study group of the research consisted of 318 students studying at different high schools in Bursa, Turkey, in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. "Demographic Information Form" and "Academic Amotivation Scale" were used to collect data. Data were analyzed by applying descriptive statistics, independent groups t-test, and a one-way analysis of variance. The results showed that high school students had moderate academic amotivation. Students' academic amotivation levels differed significantly according to gender, grade level, school type, income level, and parental education. Based on the research results, some suggestions for practice have been developed.

**Keywords:** Academic amotivation, Demographic variables, High school students.

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## Introduction

Today, academic amotivation has become an important problem for the education community. Teachers find it difficult to include students with low academic motivation. Lack of motivation can cause reluctance and, therefore, discipline problems. Investigating the factors associated with academic amotivation can better understand the factors that cause amotivation. In this study, the level of academic amotivation of high school students was examined by comparing them according to some demographic characteristics. The results obtained can be a guide to increase the quality of guidance services to provide and maintain motivation.

Motivation comprises internal and external factors that reveal, control and maintain behavior (Sutherland, 1995, p. 282). The individual is taking action for a behavior depends on his motivation. Motivation significantly affects the behavior's severity, energy level, and continuity (Akbaba, 2006, p.347). In this respect, motivation can be defined as an internal force that activates the individual and pushes him to perform some behaviors. The motivation process has a complex structure. However, it is possible to explain the motivation process with four stages. These stages are; need arousal, action, and satisfaction. Requirements form the source of motivation. The individual takes action to meet his needs. When the individual meets his needs, he finds comfort. There are physiological and psychological needs. Needs such as hunger and thirst are physiological needs. Needs such as love, security, and belonging are psychological needs. The driving force that moves the individual to meet the needs is arousal. In order to meet the needs, the individual needs to take action. It is possible to take action with arousal. The action begins with movement. The primary purpose of the action is to meet the needs of the individual. The final stage of motivation is satisfaction as long as the needs are met, the satisfaction of the individual experience. After satisfaction, new needs may occur in the individual. The stages in the motivation process can continue as a cycle (Kodaz, 2016, p.27).

Academic motivation is related to enthusiasm and energy in the academic field (Direktör & Nuri, 2017, p.67). Students with high academic motivation show more effort and perseverance to succeed in their courses. Academic motivation has a significant impact on student success. Because, thanks to motivation, students make more effort to insist on and work on academic issues. Thanks to academic motivation, students gain the necessary energy for academic work. Academic motivation creates the will and power to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the academic field. It is associated with cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors related to the academic field, such as academic motivation, creative thinking, school satisfaction, school engagement, and homework performance (Vallerand et al., 1992). Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation are essential components of academic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is divided into three intrinsic motivations knowing, achieving, and experience. Getting satisfaction from participating in an activity in the academic field, discovering, achieving, and learning are indicators of intrinsic motivation. The source of motivation may also depend on external factors. The individual can also take action to obtain rewards, money, praise, and grades. Individuals with high extrinsic motivation may see the task they need to accomplish as a tool that will lead them to a reward. Another dimension of motivation is amotivation. Characteristics such as lack of intention to develop behavior, not taking action, not being motivated internally or externally, and reluctance is indicators of amotivation. Unmotivated individuals cannot establish a relationship between activity and behavior. Unmotivated individuals do not have enough



intention and impulse to perform a particular behavior (Ergin & Karataş, 2018, p.872). Weakening self-efficacy belief for a task or not valuing a task can cause a lack of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.237).

Many pieces of research related to academic motivation have been carried out in Turkey. It was determined that the Academic Amotivation Scale developed by İlter (2019) by Legault, Green-Demers, and Pelletier (2006) was adapted into Turkish. The four-factor scale consisting of sixteen items showed an acceptable level of agreement with the data obtained from Turkish high school students. Academic achievement/performance and personal factors are among the subjects most commonly associated with motivation in Turkey (Yurt, 2022). Sıcak and Başören (2015) stated that lack of academic motivation differs according to gender, grade level, academic average, settlement, and school satisfaction. Yurt and Bozer (2015) reported that male students had a higher lack of motivation. However, Türk and Gürkan (2019) stated that lack of motivation did not differ according to gender and grade level. İlter (2021) stated that academic amotivation explains 29% of the change in academic achievement.

Loss of motivation related to the value attributed to the task, ability beliefs, and effort beliefs negatively affect academic achievement. Zembat et al. (2018) stated that there is a negative and significant relationship between academic amotivation and academic grade point average. Lack of motivation is common in schools. Lack of motivation is a significant problem for both teachers and students. Students who lack motivation may experience feelings of helplessness and dissatisfaction. It may not be possible for teachers to continue their teaching services in a healthy way in the classroom where students with low academic motivation are present. In this respect, it is crucial to investigate the factors that cause students' lack of academic motivation. Knowing the factors related to academic amotivation can provide better quality guidance services. This study aimed to examine the academic amotivation of Turkish high school students according to different variables. For this purpose, answers to the following research questions were sought.

- 1- What is the level of academic amotivation of high school students?
- 2- Does the academic amotivation of high school students differ significantly by gender?
- 3- Does the academic amotivation of high school students show a significant difference according to the grade level?
- 4- Does the academic amotivation of high school students differ significantly according to the type of high school?
- 5- Does the academic amotivation of high school students differ significantly according to their monthly income?
- 6- Does the academic amotivation of high school students differ significantly according to their mother's education level?
- 7- Does the academic amotivation of high school students differ significantly according to their father's education level?

## **Method**

### **Model of the Research**

This study was carried out based on the causal comparison design. Causal comparison studies are studies that aim



to "determine the causes and consequences of differences between human groups without any intervention on conditions and participants" (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008, p.16). This study used the causal-comparative research design; the academic amotivation levels of high school students were compared according to gender, class, school type, income, and mother and father education level.

### Research Sample

The participants of this study consist of 318 students studying at different high schools in Bursa, Turkey, in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The students were included in the study by choosing the convenient sampling method. However, in selecting the sample, it was tried to provide diversity in secondary education institutions within the Turkish education system. Anatolian, vocational, science and social sciences high school students were reached in this direction. All of the students participated in the study voluntarily. Demographic information of the students included in the study is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Students by Demographic Characteristics

		f	%
Gender	Female	164	51.6
	Male	154	48.4
Age	14	65	20.4
	15	93	29.2
	16	86	27.0
	17 and over	74	23.3
Class	9	73	23.0
	10	93	29.2
	11	89	28.0
	12	63	19.8
School type	Anatolian High School	110	34.6
	Vocational High School	65	20.4
	Science High School	61	19.2
	Social Sciences High School	82	25.8
Income	Low	38	11.9
	Medium	245	77.0
	High	35	11.0
Mother's education level	Primary school	61	19.2
	Secondary School	65	20.4
	High School	73	23.0
	Associate Degree	54	17.0
	Undergraduate and above	65	20.4
Father's education level	Primary school	42	13.2
	Secondary School	56	17.6
	High School	64	20.1
	Associate Degree	56	17.6
	Undergraduate and above	100	31.4



When the table is examined, it is understood that 51.6% of the students are female and 48.4% are male. 23% of the students are in the ninth, 29.2% in the tenth, 28% in the eleventh, and 19.8% in the twelfth grade. 34.6% of the students are in Anatolian High School, 20.4% in Vocational High School, 19.2% in Science High School, and 25.8% in Social Sciences High School. A large proportion of the students (77%) stated that their income level is medium. Most mothers are in high school (23%), and a large proportion of fathers are graduates of undergraduate or higher (31.4%).

### Research Instruments

**Demographic Information Form:** A demographic information form developed by the researcher was used to determine the diagnostic characteristics of the students. Questions about gender, age, class level, income status, school type, and mother and father education were included. The questions are of multiple-choice type.

**Academic Amotivation Scale (AAS):** The Academic Amotivation Scale developed by Legault, Green-Demers, and Pelletier (2006) and adapted into Turkish by İlter (2019) was used to determine the level of academic amotivation of students. The scale, which consists of 16 items, is in 7-point Likert type. The measurement tool has dimensions of value placed on the task, Ability beliefs, Characteristics of the task, and Effort beliefs. All items on the scale are negative. High scores obtained from the scale indicate a high level of academic motivation. The Cronbach alpha coefficient calculated for the scale in this study was 0.87.

### Data Analysis

The academic amotivation scale scores distribution was analyzed based on the skewness and kurtosis coefficients. For the normal distribution assumption to be met, it is sufficient for the skewness and kurtosis coefficients to be in the range of  $\pm 1$  (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). It was observed that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients calculated in this study were within the specified range (Table 1).

Table 2. Descriptive Values of Scores from the Academic Amotivation Scale

Variables	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			z	SE	z	SE
Value placed on the task	10.60	5.67	0.66	0.14	-0.39	0.27
Ability beliefs	10.18	5.54	0.78	0.14	-0.13	0.27
Characteristics of the task	15.52	7.18	0.11	0.14	-1.00	0.27
Effort beliefs	13.98	6.48	0.22	0.14	-0.82	0.27
Total (AAS)*	50.29	20.36	0.22	0.14	-0.64	0.27

\*All items on the scale are negative. High scores obtained from the scale indicate a high level of academic amotivation

Independent groups t-test was used to compare students' academic amotivation scores by gender. One-way analysis of variance was used to compare the scores according to the variables of grade level, school type, income, and educational status of parents. Data were analyzed using SPSS 24.0 statistical package program.



## Results

Table 1. Examination of Academic Motivation of High School Students by Gender

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	t(316)	p
Value placed on the task	Female	164	9.68	5.42	-3.03	0.00*
	Male	154	11.58	5.78		
Ability beliefs	Female	164	10.06	5.47	-0.40	0.69
	Male	154	10.31	5.64		
Characteristics of the task	Female	164	15.05	7.18	-1.21	0.23
	Male	154	16.02	7.17		
Effort beliefs	Female	164	14.54	6.48	1.59	0.11
	Male	154	13.39	6.46		
Total (AAS)	Female	164	49.34	20.40	-0.86	0.39
	Male	154	51.31	20.33		

\*p<0,05

When Table 1 is examined, it is understood that there is no significant difference between Ability beliefs, Characteristics of the task, Effort beliefs and Total score averages by gender ( $p>0.05$ ). However, the mean Value placed on the task score showed a significant difference according to gender ( $p<0.05$ ). Men are more likely to be amotivated with value placed on the task.

Table 2. Investigation of Academic Motivation of High School Students by Grade Level

Variables	Class	N	M	SD	F(3;314)	p	Scheffe Post-Hoc
Value placed on the task	9	73	10.04	5.96	1.99	0.12	-
	10	93	10.16	5.79			
	11	63	10.16	5.13			
	12	89	11.84	5.57			
Ability beliefs	9	73	10.37	5.69	1.57	0.20	-
	10	93	10.28	5.55			
	11	63	8.90	4.98			
	12	89	10.83	5.75			
Characteristics of the task	9 <sup>a</sup>	73	13.00	6.45	6.87	0.00*	d>a,
	10 <sup>b</sup>	93	15.03	7.21			
	11 <sup>c</sup>	63	15.75	7.16			
	12 <sup>d</sup>	89	17.93	7.06			
Effort beliefs	9	73	12.84	6.20	2.27	0.08	-
	10	93	13.49	6.64			
	11	63	14.13	6.85			
	12	89	15.34	6.14			
Total (AAS)	9 <sup>a</sup>	73	46.25	20.66	3.56	0.01*	d>a,
	10 <sup>b</sup>	93	48.97	20.38			
	11 <sup>c</sup>	63	48.94	18.88			
	12 <sup>d</sup>	89	55.94	20.23			

\*p<0,05



When the Table 2 is examined, it is understood that there is no significant difference between the value placed on the task, Ability beliefs, and Effort beliefs scores according to class level ( $p>0.05$ ). However, the Characteristics of the task and Total score averages showed a significant difference according to the grade level ( $p<0.05$ ). It was observed that twelfth-grade students' general academic amotivation related to the Characteristics of the task was higher than that of ninth-grade students.

Table 3. Investigation of Academic Motivation of High School Students by School Type

Variables	School Type	N	M	SD	F(3;314)	p	Scheffe Post-Hoc
Value placed on the task	Anatolian High School <sup>a</sup>	110	9.19	5.87	8.23	0.00*	b>a, b>d,
	Vocational High School <sup>b</sup>	65	13.26	5.14			
	Science High School <sup>c</sup>	61	11.25	5.51			
	Social Sciences High School <sup>d</sup>	82	9.91	5.19			
Ability beliefs	Anatolian High School <sup>a</sup>	110	9.45	5.17	5.11	0.00*	b>a, b>c,
	Vocational High School <sup>b</sup>	65	12.43	5.99			
	Science High School <sup>c</sup>	61	9.15	5.39			
	Social Sciences High School <sup>d</sup>	82	10.16	5.37			
Characteristics of the task	Anatolian High School <sup>a</sup>	110	16.86	7.93	0.52	0.66	-
	Vocational High School <sup>b</sup>	65	15.00	7.22			
	Science High School <sup>c</sup>	61	15.78	6.91			
	Social Sciences High School <sup>d</sup>	82	15.53	7.57			
Effort beliefs	Anatolian High School <sup>a</sup>	110	14.55	6.31	0.63	0.60	-
	Vocational High School <sup>b</sup>	65	13.57	6.50			
	Science High School <sup>c</sup>	61	13.91	6.12			
	Social Sciences High School <sup>d</sup>	82	15.04	7.53			
Total (AAS)	Anatolian High School <sup>a</sup>	110	45.24	20.46	3.71	0.01*	b>a,
	Vocational High School <sup>b</sup>	65	54.42	20.18			
	Science High School <sup>c</sup>	61	52.16	20.93			
	Social Sciences High School <sup>d</sup>	82	52.40	18.90			

\* $p<0,05$

When the Table 3 is examined, it is understood that the average scores of Characteristics of the task and Effort beliefs do not differ significantly according to the type of school ( $p>0.05$ ). However, the value placed on the task, Ability beliefs, and Total score differed significantly by school type ( $p<0.05$ ). In general, vocational high school students have higher academic motivation. Anatolian high school students, on the other hand, have lower academic motivation.



Table 4. Examination of Academic Motivation of High School Students by Income Level

Variables	Income level	N	M	SD	F(2;315)	p	Scheffe Post-Hoc
Value placed on the task	Low	38	11.95	4.83	1.21	0.30	-
	Medium	245	10.42	5.79			
	High	35	10.43	5.59			
Ability beliefs	Low <sup>a</sup>	38	13.11	6.39	7.90	0.00*	a>c,
	Medium <sup>b</sup>	245	10.01	5.35			
	High <sup>c</sup>	35	8.23	4.81			
Characteristics of the task	Low	38	16.92	7.27	1.60	0.20	-
	Medium	245	15.53	7.21			
	High	35	13.91	6.71			
Effort beliefs	Low	38	15.24	6.30	0.86	0.43	-
	Medium	245	13.86	6.57			
	High	35	13.49	6.04			
Total (AAS)	Low <sup>a</sup>	38	57.21	20.09	3.06	0.048*	a>c,
	Medium <sup>b</sup>	245	49.82	20.61			
	High <sup>c</sup>	35	46.06	17.44			

\*p&lt;0,05

When the Table 4 is examined, it is understood that the average scores of Characteristics of the task and Effort beliefs do not differ significantly according to the type of school ( $p>0.05$ ). However, the value placed on the task, Ability beliefs, and Total score differed significantly by school type ( $p<0.05$ ). In general, vocational high school students have higher academic motivation. Anatolian high school students, on the other hand, have lower academic motivation.

Table 5. Investigation of Academic Motivation of High School Students by Mother Education Level

Variables	Mother's education level	N	M	SD	F(4;313)	p	Scheffe Post-Hoc
Value placed on the task	Primary school	61	11.98	6.24	1.43	0.22	-
	Secondary school	65	10.31	5.67			
	High school	73	9.71	5.49			
	Associate degree	54	10.78	5.66			
	Undergraduate and above	65	10.46	5.23			
Ability beliefs	Primary school <sup>a</sup>	61	12.93	5.86	5.58	0.00*	a>c, a>d, a>e,
	Secondary school <sup>b</sup>	65	10.26	5.62			
	High school <sup>c</sup>	73	9.48	4.87			
	Associate degree <sup>d</sup>	54	9.52	5.31			
	Undergraduate and above <sup>e</sup>	65	8.77	5.23			
Characteristics of the task	Primary school	61	16.08	7.16	1.17	0.32	-
	Secondary school	65	15.75	7.60			
	High school	73	15.58	6.90			
	Associate degree	54	13.67	6.95			
	Undergraduate and above	65	16.23	7.23			
Effort beliefs	Primary school	61	15.69	6.53	2.10	0.08	-
	Secondary school	65	14.23	6.47			
	High school	73	13.86	6.65			
	Associate degree	54	12.26	5.78			
	Undergraduate and above	65	13.71	6.59			
Total (AAS)	Primary school	61	56.69	21.98	2.17	0.07	-
	Secondary school	65	49.77	18.85			
	High school	73	49.41	20.46			
	Associate degree	54	46.22	19.62			
	Undergraduate and above	65	49.17	20.00			

\*p&lt;0,05





When the Table 5 is examined, it is understood that there is no significant difference between the value placed on the task, the characteristics of the task, Effort beliefs, and Total score averages according to the mother's education level ( $p>0.05$ ). However, the mean Ability beliefs scores differed significantly according to the mother's educational status ( $p<0.05$ ). Students whose mothers are primary school graduates have higher academic motivation related to Ability beliefs. Academic amotivation related to Ability beliefs is lower than that of students whose mothers have an associate's degree and undergraduate and above.

Table 6. Examination of Academic Motivation of High School Students by Father Education Level

Variables	Father's education level	N	M	SD	F(4;313)	p	Scheffe Post-Hoc
Value placed on the task	Primary school <sup>a</sup>	42	12.74	6.40	4.54	0.00	a>c, a>d,
	Secondary school <sup>b</sup>	56	11.68	6.10			
	High school <sup>c</sup>	64	9.23	5.30			
	Associate degree <sup>d</sup>	56	8.86	5.08			
	Undergraduate and above <sup>e</sup>	100	10.96	5.24			
Ability beliefs	Primary school <sup>a</sup>	42	13.79	6.32	7.95	0.00	a>c, a>d, a>e,
	Secondary school <sup>b</sup>	56	11.30	5.35			
	High school <sup>c</sup>	64	9.97	5.34			
	Associate degree <sup>d</sup>	56	8.39	4.77			
	Undergraduate and above <sup>e</sup>	100	9.18	5.11			
Characteristics of the task	Primary school	42	17.36	7.44	2.03	0.09	-
	Secondary school	56	14.23	7.10			
	High school	64	15.75	7.23			
	Associate degree	56	13.98	7.53			
	Undergraduate and above	100	16.18	6.73			
Effort beliefs	Primary school <sup>a</sup>	42	17.38	6.98	5.20	0.00	a>c, a>d,
	Secondary school <sup>b</sup>	56	14.13	6.55			
	High school <sup>c</sup>	64	13.73	6.01			
	Associate degree <sup>d</sup>	56	11.52	6.02			
	Undergraduate and above <sup>e</sup>	100	14.02	6.25			
Total (AAS)	Primary school <sup>a</sup>	42	61.26	23.06	5,39	0,00	a>c, a>d,
	Secondary school <sup>b</sup>	56	51.34	21.76			
	High school <sup>c</sup>	64	48.69	18.51			
	Associate degree <sup>d</sup>	56	42.75	19.61			
	Undergraduate and above <sup>e</sup>	100	50.34	18.08			

When the Table 6 is examined, it is understood that there is no significant difference between the father's education level and the Characteristics of the task mean score ( $p>0.05$ ). However, the value placed on the task, Ability beliefs, Effort beliefs, and Total score averages showed a significant difference according to the father's education level ( $p<0.05$ ). Students whose fathers are primary school graduates were found to be more academically unmotivated.



## Discussion

This study, it was aimed to examine the academic amotivation of high school students. In this direction, the academic amotivation scores of the students were compared according to the variables of gender, class, school type, income level, and educational status of the parents. According to the results obtained, high school students' lack of academic motivation is moderate. Students' lack of motivation differed according to some demographic characteristics.

The results showed that the high school students included in the study had a moderate academic amotivation. This indicated that the students had a lack of motivation. Lack of academic motivation is an important problem for both students and teachers. The individual is taking action for a behavior depends on his motivation. Motivation significantly affects the severity, energy level, and continuity of the behavior (Akbaba, 2006; Vallerand et al., 1992). In this respect, lack of motivation can negatively affect students' study performance, interest in the lesson, class participation, homework performance, school satisfaction, and school commitment. High school students' acquiring near and distant goals in the academic field can increase their academic motivation.

Another result of the study is that male students have higher amotivation related to the value placed on the task. This result is consistent with the results of some studies in the literature (Arslan, 2021; Sıcak & Başören, 2015; Tuncer, Yelken & Tanrıseven, 2018; Yerlikaya, 2014; Yurt & Bozer, 2015). Some studies have stated that lack of motivation does not show a significant difference according to gender (Türk & Gürkan, 2019). Studies in the literature and the results of these studies have shown that gender is an essential factor affecting motivation.

According to the results, twelfth-grade students have the highest academic motivation. On the other hand, ninth-grade students have the lowest academic motivation. It was observed that as the grade level increased, the lack of academic motivation increased. There are studies in the literature stating that grade level is effective on academic motivation (Ali, 2016; Çakır, 2006; Ergin & Karataş, 2018; Sıcak & Başören, 2015; İlğan et al., 2013). However, it is possible to come across studies reporting no lack of academic motivation according to grade level (Arslan, 2021). The senior students' focusing on exams, staying away from extracurricular activities, being undecided about choosing a profession, and experiencing exam-related anxiety and stress may have negatively affected their academic motivation.

According to the results, vocational high school students have higher academic amotivation. Anatolian high school students, on the other hand, have lower academic amotivation. Studies in the literature state that the type of school is effective on academic motivation (Aktaş, 2016; Seyis, 2011). A large proportion of Anatolian high schools in our country accept students by central examination or according to the school average. Vocational high schools have lower acceptance scores than other schools. Students with academic career goals and higher success prefer schools with higher scores, such as Anatolian high schools. Therefore, it is expected that the academic motivation of the students who attend these schools is higher than those who attend the vocational high school.

This study found that the academic motivation of high school students differed according to their income level.



High school students with low-income levels have higher academic amotivation than students with high-income levels. The results obtained are consistent with the results of the studies in the literature (Aktaş, 2016; Seyis, 2011; Yazıcı, 2009). Higher-income students are more likely to access opportunities such as courses, workshops, and private lessons. These students can more easily access resources that will help their lessons. They may face fewer financial barriers to achieving their academic goals. These students can be expected to have lower academic motivation.

Students whose mothers are primary school graduates have higher academic motivation related to Ability beliefs. Academic motivation related to Ability beliefs is lower than that of students whose mothers have an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or higher. Students whose fathers are primary school graduates were found to be more academically unmotivated. According to these results, it was observed that the student's academic motivation deficiencies increased as the parents' education level decreased. The results obtained are consistent with the results of some studies in the literature (Demir & Arı, 2013; Türk & Gürkan, 2019). A study stated that maternal education level is negatively related to academic motivation.

## **Conclusion**

As a result, high school students' academic amotivation is moderate. Male students have higher amotivation related to the value placed on the task. It was observed that as the grade level increased, the lack of academic motivation increased. Vocational high school students have higher academic motivation. Anatolian high school students, on the other hand, have lower academic motivation. According to the income level, the academic motivation of high school students differs. It was determined that as the parents' education level decreased, the student's academic motivation deficiencies increased.

## **Recommendations**

Academic amotivation negatively affects students' interests, attitudes, and desire for lessons. In this respect, knowing the factors associated with academic amotivation can provide better quality guidance services. It should be considered that there may be a gender-related difference in academic amotivation. Grade level, school type, income level, and parental education are variables associated with academic amotivation. Senior high school students, vocational high school students, students with low-income levels, and students whose parents are primary school graduates may need more support in maintaining their academic motivation. This situation can be taken into account while continuing the guidance services. Studies on different samples can increase the generalizability of the results obtained.

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