



## The relationship between the quality of school life perceptions of the secondary school students and their lifelong learning tendencies\*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of the quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies of secondary school students in terms of gender, grade level and school type variables. The population of the research is the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders studying at secondary schools in Hendek district of Sakarya province in 2017-2018 academic year. In this context, the sample of the study consists of a total of 640 students, 287 boys and 353 girls studying at 9 different schools in the same district. The thirty-five item Quality of School Life Scale developed by Sarı (2007) was used to measure the quality of school life of the participants, and 17-item Lifelong Learning Tendencies Scale developed by Gür-Erdoğan and Aرسال (2016) was used to measure the lifelong learning levels in the study which was conducted in the relational screening model. The research found a moderate positive and significant relationship between the quality of school life and lifelong learning.

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### 1. Introduction

Schools are institutions that prepare individuals for the real life and are responsible for their development as a whole (Marks,1998). Schools are places where individuals complete their academic, social and personal development (Marks,1998; Ryan, 1993). It was revealed that parents, teachers, school administrators and students agree that schools should be the places that maximize students' learning, make the students feel happy and safe, let them be satisfied with their teachers and get them enjoy learning (Marks, 1998). Bourke and Smith (1989) stated that a better school life helps the academic development of students. Weston (1998) emphasized that academic success is not the only indication of a 'good school' but a good school is a school which can facilitate the development of individuals' abilities and their social and personal development as well as their academic success. For this reason, the quality of schools, where individuals spend most of their time and have a great importance in their lives, has been one of the subjects that attracted educators in recent years (Leonard, 2002).

When the definitions for the quality of school life are studied; the quality of school life is defined as that students, teachers, administrators and other contributors feel happy and safe in schools that develop individuals academically, socially and personally according to the needs of the society (Mok and Flynn, 2002). Sarı (2007), on the other hand, regards the quality of school life as individuals' education according to the expectations of the society, and their levels of satisfaction with the schools in which they spend most of

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their time. Based on these definitions, it is possible to say that students' happiness at schools, feeling safe and satisfied with their environment will make them happy individuals and help them feel as a part of the school both in and out of school time. This will affect other individuals in school and society indirectly as well as the outcomes of education positively (Arıkan and Sarı, 2016).

In the definitions above, it was emphasized that one of the aims of the schools was to educate individuals in accordance with the expectations of the society (Marks, 1998; Ryan, 1993 and Weston, 1998). Bourke and Smith (1989) revealed that the quality of school life has an effect on students' academic success and students with a good school life continue their education after compulsory education and are willing to continue their education. The quality of the schools that are suitable for the needs of the current age, know where and how to use the information, can benefit from the opportunities offered by the age and ensure the continuity of their education, in other words, their ability to educate individuals who are lifelong learners is an important factor (İzci and Koç, 2012).

Rapid globalization of the world has made it compulsory to raise individuals who are suitable for the conditions of the age and can meet the needs of the society (Alpkaya, 2000). In order for the individuals in the information age to adapt to the age, they must grow up as individuals who consciously acquire knowledge, use the acquired knowledge, follow the technological developments required by the age and learn to learn (Çetin, 2008). For this reason, the concept of lifelong learning has been one of the important concepts of the 21st century, in which knowledge has rapidly developed and changed and has been put on the agenda of many educational researchers. It has been added to the agenda of Turkey, become a topic recognized by educators and researchers since the 2000s. In this regard, it is aimed to determine whether there is a relationship between the perceptions of quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies of the secondary school students in this study, which is expected to make a significant contribution to the literature on the concepts of perception of quality of school life as well as lifelong learning tendency and the two concepts were examined in terms of gender, grade level and school type variables.

## **2. Method**

This study was designed with a correlational survey model since it sought an answer for the question whether there is a relationship between the life-long learning tendencies of the secondary school students and the quality of school life. Fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders studying at secondary schools in Hendek district of Sakarya province in 2017-2018 academic year compose the population of the study. The sample consists of 640 students who are selected by the disproportional cluster sampling method. 353 (%55.2) of the students in the sample are girls and 287 (%44.8) are boys. 404 (%63.1) of the students study at general secondary school and 236 (%36.9) at Imam Hatip secondary school. There are 150 (%23.4) students in the 5th grade, 206 (%32.2) in the 6th grade, 182 (%28.4) in the 7th grade, and 102 (%15.9) in the 8th grade. Along with a personal information form consisting of 3 questions, 5 point likert type 17-item Lifelong Learning Tendencies Scale developed by Gür-Erdoğan and Arsal (2016) and 5 point likert type 35-item Quality of School Life Scale developed by Sarı (2007) were used as data collection tools in the study. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed to test the construct validity of the scales on the applied group. According to Confirmatory Factory Analysis, it was concluded that, Lifelong Learning Tendencies Scale and Quality of School Life Scale were valid measurement tools for the sample in this study. The normality of the data was analysed first at the stage of data analysis. It was determined that the data was non-normally distributed and Mann-Whitney U test was used in the research problems because "Lifelong Learning Tendency" and "Quality of School Life " were compared according to gender and school type variables and these variables have two categories. Since the grade level variable has more than two categories, Kruskal-Wallis test was used in the research problems comparing these variables. The relationship between the variables "Lifelong Learning Tendency" and "Quality of School Life" was analysed by using Spearman Rho coefficient due to the non-normal distribution of data.

## **3. Findings**

The first of the findings reached through the analysis of the data obtained from the study is about The level of students' perceptions of the quality of school life and their lifelong learning tendencies. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the total scores obtained from Quality of School Life Scale and Lifelong Learning Tendencies Scale and presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics on Students' Perceptions of Quality of School Life and Lifelong Learning Tendencies

	Min.	Maks.	Median	Art. Mean	Item Art. Mean.	Standard deviation
Perception of Quality of School Life	51.00	175.00	122.00	121.477	3.471	23.096
Lifelong Learning Tendency	18.00	85.00	67.00	65.472	3.851	12.623

When the descriptive statistics calculated in Table 1 are examined, it has been calculated that the median is 122.00, the arithmetic average is 121.477 and the standard deviation is 23.096 for the "Perception of Quality of School Life". It has been calculated that the median is 67.00, the arithmetic average 65.472 and the standard deviation is 12.623 for the "Lifelong Learning Tendency". The median values were found to be greater than the arithmetic average in the findings obtained from both scales. It was determined that the arithmetic mean of the items calculated for the total score was close to the answer "I am neutral" for Quality of School Life Scale and "I agree" for Lifelong Learning Tendencies Scale.

This study has tried to determine whether different variables affect students' perceptions of quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies. Firstly, the study sought an answer for the question of "Do students' perceptions of quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies differ significantly by gender?" In this context, the scores of female and male students were compared with the Mann-Whitney U test and the results related to this test are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Students' Perceptions of Quality of School Life and Lifelong Learning Tendencies in Terms of Gender

	Sex	N	Rank ave.	Rank sum.	U	P
Perception of Quality of School Life	Female	353	342.08	120754.00	43038.000	0.001*
	Male	287	293.96	84366.00		
Lifelong Learning Tendency	Female	353	346,44	122292,00	41500,000	0.000*
	Male	287	288,60	82828,00		

\*  $p < 0.05$

According to Table 2, there is a significant difference in terms of gender in "Perception of Quality of School Life" ( $U = 43038$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and "Lifelong Learning Tendencies" ( $U = 41500$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This differentiation has been in favour of female students on both scales.

Another question the study sought an answer for is the question of: "Do students' perceptions of quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies differ significantly in terms of grade level?" In this context, the scores of 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders were compared with the Kruskal-Wallis test and the results related to this test are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Comparison of Students' Perceptions of Quality of School Life and Lifelong Learning Tendencies in Terms of Grade Level

	Class	N	Rank ave.	S.d.	$\chi^2$	p	Difference
Perception of Quality of School Life	5	150	399.07	3	38.446	0.000*	5-6, 5-7, 5-8
	6	206	313.00				
	7	182	280.63				
	8	102	291.26				
Lifelong Learning Tendency	5	150	365,37	3	14.564	0.002*	5-7, 5-8
	6	206	322,88				
	7	182	299,67				

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8                      102                      286,87

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\*  $p < 0.05$ 

There is a significant difference in "Perception of Quality of School Life" ( $\chi^2_{(3)} = 34.586$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $\chi^2_{(3)} = 48.519$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\chi^2_{(3)} = 40.670$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and  $\chi^2_{(3)} = 38.446$ ,  $p < 0.05$  respectively) as seen in Table 3. It has been observed with the multiple comparisons made for situations with significant differences that the significant difference in "Perception of Quality of School Life" is between 5th grade and 6th grade, 5th grade and 7th grade as well as 5th grade and 8th grade and the difference is in favour of 5th grade in each comparison. There is also a significant difference ( $\chi^2_{(3)} = 22.616$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and  $\chi^2_{(3)} = 14.564$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in "Lifelong Learning Tendency". The difference found in "Lifelong Learning Tendency" with the multiple comparisons made for situations with significant differences was in favour of 5th grade in the comparisons between 5th and 7th grade and between 5th and 8th grade.

The study sought an answer also for the question of "Do students' perceptions of quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies differ significantly according to the school type?" In this context, the scores of secondary school and Imam Hatip secondary school students were compared with the Mann-Whitney U test and the results related to this test are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Comparison of Students' Perceptions of Quality of School Life and Lifelong Learning Tendencies in Terms of School Type

	School Type	N	Rank ave.	Rank sum.	U	$p$
Perception of Quality of School Life	Secondary School	404	287.42	116117.50	45624.500	0.000*
	Imam Hatip	236	377.13	89002.50		
Lifelong Learning Tendency	Secondary School	404	318,73	128766,00	46956,000	0.751
	Imam Hatip	236	323,53	76354,00		
	Secondary School					

\*  $p < 0.05$ 

As it can be seen in Table 4, there is a significant difference between the answers of Imam Hatip secondary school students and the answers of secondary school students in "Perception of Quality of School Life". When the mean ranks are examined, it is determined that the value of Imam Hatip secondary school students is higher than the value of secondary school students. This is a proof that the differentiation occurred in favour of students of the Imam Hatip school. However, there is no significant difference between Imam Hatip secondary school students and secondary school students in "Lifelong Learning Tendency" ( $U = 46956$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

The main problem for which this study seeks an answer is "Is there a significant relationship between students' lifelong learning tendencies and quality of school life?" In this context, the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient between students' perceptions of quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies was calculated and presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Relationship between Students' Lifelong Learning Tendencies and their Perceptions of Quality of School Life

	Perception of Quality of School Life	Lifelong Learning Tendency
Lifelong Learning Tendency	0.481**	1
Perception of Quality of School Life	1	0.481**

\*\* $p < 0.001$ 

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that there is a moderate positive and significant ( $r_s = 0.481$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) relationship between "Lifelong Learning Tendency" and "Perception of Quality of School Life" which are the main variables of the research problem.

#### 4. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

The average score of secondary school students on the perception of quality of school life scale was found to be 3.47. As a result of the literature review, it was seen that the scores obtained in the studies were converted to 1-5 points and the averages such as 3.47, 3.27 and 3.15 were interpreted as moderate. It can be said that the scores obtained are moderate and based on this result, students' perceptions of quality of school life are moderate as a result of the literature review. The lowest score was 18 and the highest score was 85 as a result of the calculation of students' lifelong learning tendency scores. The average of the total scores obtained from the lifelong learning tendency scale was found to be 65.472, the scores obtained were converted to 1-5 points and the result was found as 3.85. Accordingly, it can be said that the lifelong learning tendencies of the students are moderate. The obtained data are similar to the numerical data of other academic studies. In the study of Sarı (2007) on the secondary school students' perceptions of quality of school life, Sarı (2007) found the average score of the students on quality of school life scale as 3.47 and interpreted them as moderate. Karalar (2017) stated that the students' mean score on the scale is 3.27 and that students have moderate quality of school life in the study. Bilgiç (2009) found the quality of school life scores of the students as 3.15 in a study working with secondary school students, and this result and the current research support each other. Studies with identical results to this study were not reported due to the limited research of secondary school students' lifelong learning tendencies in the literature review of the related field. However, Şahin and Arcagök (2014) found in a study performed with teachers that teachers' lifelong learning tendencies were high. Diker Coşkun and Demirel (2012) stated that lifelong learning tendencies of university students were moderate. Kozikoğlu and Altunova (2018) stated in their study that prospective teachers have a very high level of lifelong learning tendency.

When students' quality of school life scale scores are examined in terms of gender, it can be said that the school life quality of female students is higher than that of male students. Studies showing similarities and differences to the current research results both in Turkey and abroad were found in the literature. Önder and Sarı (2012), Alaca (2011), Karalar (2017), Durmaz (2008), Demir, Kaya and Metin (2012), Marks (1998), Mok and Flynn (2002) and Karatzias, Papadioti-Athanasiou, Power and Swanson (2002) found similar results in favour of female students in researches on quality of school life. However, Tunç and Beşaltı (2012) stated that the gender variable did not predict the perception of quality of school life. Gedik (2009) stated in a study that there was no significant difference in favour of any group in students' perceptions of quality of school life in terms of gender. When the lifelong learning tendencies of the students in terms of gender variable were examined, a significant difference was found between the average scores of the male and female students. Akçaalan (2016), who conducted research on the relationship between university students' lifelong and social emotional learning, and Yurdakul (2016), who examined the relationship between autonomous learning and lifelong learning of secondary school students, obtained the results that lifelong learning tendency was in favour of girls. In studies abroad which examined the lifelong learning tendency in terms of gender variable, it was observed that female students' lifelong learning tendencies were high (Goodrich, 2015 and Jansen-Simmermon 2005). Tunca, Şahin and Aydın (2015) and Savuran (2014) stated in their studies that the gender variable didn't differentiate lifelong learning tendency, contrary to the findings obtained in this study,

Within the scope of the research, the relationship between quality of school life and grade level variable was examined and according to the findings obtained, there was a significant difference between the 5th and 6th grades, 5th and 7th grades and 5th and 8th grades in the perceptions of quality of school life and it was observed that this difference was in favour of 5th grade in each of them. Studies similar to the current research results as well as differing findings and interpretations were found in the literature. Kong (2008) studied the quality of school life perceptions of elementary school students and secondary school students and stated that elementary school students had higher quality of school life. Bilgiç (2009) who worked with secondary school students, stated that the quality of school life of 6th graders is higher than that of 7th and 8th graders. Within the scope of the research, the relationship between the life-long learning tendency and

the grade level variable was also examined, and according to the findings obtained, a significant difference was found in the lifelong learning tendencies of the students in favour of 5th grade in the comparisons between the 5th and 7th grades and between the 5th and 8th grades. Significant difference was found between lifelong learning and grade level in a study conducted by Goodrich (2015), supporting the findings in this study. However, it was assumed that there would be a difference in favour of lower classes, but a significant difference was found in favour of upper classes unlike this study. In the study conducted by Akçaalan (2016), it was stated that there was no significant difference between lifelong learning and grade level.

When the students' perceptions of quality of school life were analysed by school type, it was observed that there was a difference in favour of Imam Hatip secondary school students between the answers given by Imam Hatip secondary school students and those of secondary school students. As a result, it can be said that the quality of school life of Imam Hatip secondary school students is more positive. When the literature was reviewed, no research studying the same parameters was found. On the other hand, researches in which the location of the schools were evaluated in terms of socio-economic aspects or the researches in which the schools were evaluated in terms of successes were studied. In the study of Dönmez (2016) analysed in this context, it was seen that the school type variable did not make a significant difference on the quality of school life. It was also examined whether the lifelong learning tendencies of the students differ according to the type of school within the scope of the research. There was no significant difference in the total scores of lifelong learning tendencies of secondary school students scale according to the type of school. When the relevant literature is reviewed, no studies that overlap with this subject and analyse the relationship between the two variables have been found.

It was determined that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between the students' perceptions of quality of school life and lifelong learning tendencies, which are the main variables of the research problem in this study. According to this result, it can be interpreted that as the quality of school life increases, the lifelong learning tendency will also increase. Although this result obtained from the research is an expected result, no comparison could be made since no similar studies investigating the relationship between these two variables were reported in the literature. However, interpretations regarding that lifelong learning constitutes an important step in the self-realization phase and that an aim of lifelong learning is to increase the quality of life of the individual (Gününcü, Odabaşı and Kuzu 2012) were found in the literature review. Considering the results of the research, it can be said that students with high school life quality will turn into lifelong learner individuals that the information age and the society need.

In the light of the results obtained from the study, the following can be suggested:

As a result of the findings obtained from the research, it is seen that quality of school life and lifelong learning are related to each other and that the high school life quality of individuals plays an important role in making them lifelong learners. In this context, more studies and planning can be made to increase the awareness of the importance of the concept of lifelong learning, to popularize it and to help the individuals acquire it in school age.

This research was carried out in Hendek district of Sakarya province. Studies to determine the lifelong learning tendencies of the students in different districts of Sakarya as well as in different provinces of Turkey and their perceptions of quality of school life can be performed.

As a result of the findings obtained in the current research, it was seen that the gender variable created a significant difference in favour of female students in terms of both quality of school life and lifelong learning. Since many studies in the literature support this result, different methods and approaches can be researched to increase the perceptions of male students' quality of school life and their lifelong learning tendencies.

It was stated in this study that there is a significant difference in student's perceptions of quality of school life according to their school type. In other studies, in-depth researches can be conducted to investigate the reason for this difference by focusing on the type of school variable.

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