



A REVIEW ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS OF VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN TERMS OF CERTAIN FACTORS: SAMPLE OF TURKEY

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study aims to identify the effect of factors including homework assignment given within semesters, class attendance and the type of high school graduated on vocational college students' academic achievements in the Corporate Accounting course.

Design/methodology/approach: In order to determine the sample' understanding level on the topic of stock corporations which is a subtopic in Corporate Accounting course, a test consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions was prepared by the researchers. The reliability of the test was determined as 0.84 by using the formula "KR-20". Causal - comparative research design was used in scope of the study. The data obtained was analyzed by using independent samples t-test, ANOVA and regression.

Findings: Upon the analyses carried out, it was found out that academic achievement varies depending on the homework assignment given within the period and class attendance hours of the student. When the joint effect of the factors on academic achievement was examined, it was seen that only the homework assignment factor has a significant effect.

Research limitations/implications: This study only examined the Corporate Accounting course which is studied by the students of Accounting and Tax Applications Department in one vocational college in Turkey. In this study, used

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variables that are thought to be related with the academic achievement and on which unbiased data can be collected were preferred.

Originality/Value: In the studies so far, the effects of the related variables on academic achievement have been examined one by one. This study determines the common effect of multiple variables used in this study called homework assignment, class attendance and the type of high school graduated on academic achievement. In this way, it will be possible to learn the variables that are more influential on academic achievement within a single study.

Keywords: vocational college, academic achievement, class attendance, homework assignment

1. Introduction

Academic achievement is defined as knowledge or skills learned by the students in courses and assessed with grades given by the teachers, test points or both (Kenç and Oktay, 2002:72). Many factors can adversely affect students' academic achievement. They could be grouped three categories as the student-oriented factors (i.e. socio-economic, individual, psychological, self-esteem, self-sufficiency, motivation, demographic, study habit) (Sarier, 2016:618), school-based factors and environmental factors (Topçu and Uzundumlu, 2012: 52). The main determinant of academic achievement is student-centered factors and the school and environmental factors have supportive characteristics (Topçu and Uzundumlu, 2012: 57). The main aim of the Vocational Colleges in Turkey is to educate qualified intermediate labor force for the basic industrial, commercial and service sectors. For this reason, vocational education and vocational schools today has a vital prescription for all sectors. Unfortunately, in these schools, academic achievement is well below expectations. Gücenme Gençoğlu and İşseveroğlu (2010:38) investigated the contribution of education and training in vocational colleges to accounting profession, and they found that despite the rapid increase in numbers of vocational colleges, the success of these school students has been rapidly diminishing. Although there are the many reasons why vocational colleges are in this condition, the entrance systems without an exam, homework assignment (HA) and class attendance have been examined in this study because they is thought to be more effective than the others.

One of the factors that have supportive characteristic in the academic achievement of the students is, without a doubt, HAs given during the semester. The HA is a learning tool outside of classroom that aims to have the students prepared

before the classes and to reinforce what (s)he learns after the classes and directs them to make analyses and research (Yuladır and Doğan, 2009:212). Though preferred at primary education level, it is seen that HAs are given at higher education levels under the names like project and research. The contribution of HA on student achievement may change depending on the teacher's and student's attitude towards it, and the amount and characteristic of it. Turanlı (2007:141) suggested that less HA has more contribution on academic achievement. Besides, there are also findings that there is a higher positive correlation between the number of HAs and the academic achievement as the grade of classes increase (Cooper, Lindsay, Nye and Greathouse, 1998). The length of time students spend on HAs varies according to their grade level and it ranges from 20 to 60 minutes (Turanlı, 2007:142). Giving too many assignments to students may lead the students to not spare time for the out-of-school social activities and resting and cause the students to be bored of studying and classes.

If the HA is perceived correctly and done promptly and conscientiously by the student, it has a positive impact on the student's academic achievement. If the HA is given as a punishment tool or not appropriate to the level, it lowers the student motivation and this has no impact on the academic achievement. One of the factors for the assignment to have an impact on the academic success is to ask the student to write the HA by hand. Generally, the HAs done by using a computer are based on the copy-paste mentality, and the students do not spend much time to do his/her HAs. Such HAs are often perfunctory, or are directly plagiarism. As Gök (2013) stated in his study, HAs that do not encourage students to think does not have any contribution on the academic achievement. However, the HAs done by using pen-paper (by hand) may make it easy to remember, and may increase the persistence of learned information. Hence in a study conducted by Demirci (2010) on determining the internet-based HA's impact on the students' academic achievements, it was shown that the success rate of the students doing their HAs by using pen and paper was higher than the ones doing web-based HAs. In a study conducted by Gök (2013), he investigated that the effects of web-based and paper-based HAs on students' achievement. At the end of the study, he found that the HA grades of the experimental group students who did web-based HA were higher than the HA grades of the control group who did paper-based HA. However, he determined that web-based HAs did not contribute to the students' academic achievements. In other words, there was no significant difference in success between the experimental and the control group.

If a HA given for any course improves the thinking ability of the student (asking the student to find his own topic of HA, developing a problem in accordance with the HA subject etc.), its positive impact on the academic achievement is unavoidable. HAs

given in this way may both prevent the students to copy their HAs from each other and may ensure that the student makes research related to the course. The HA must be given in a way to improve the knowledge level and imagination of the student. The HAs given in this manner are not perceived as unnecessary occupation both by the student and the instructor (Ilgar, 2005:123).

Another supportive factor that can be effective on the academic achievement of the students is the voluntary class attendance of the students to the course or, absenteeism. The class attendance of students at the university where this study was conducted was determined by the Senate of Karadeniz Technical University (KTU). According to the Senate of KTU, students must attend 70% of theoretical classes, and 80% of practices. Students' class attendance is followed by the instructor concerned. Sometimes, the instructor may not consider the absenteeism of the student. In this study, the preference whether to attend the class depends on the student. Class attendance is extremely important especially in courses taken for the first time and required calculations and practice. Although there are very few studies investigating the relationship between the class attendance of the students and their academic achievements, Rençber (2012) and Bostan and Karakaya (2016) emphasized the existence of a positive and high-level relationship between the class attendance of the university students to the courses and their academic achievements. On the contrary, in the study of Altinkurt (2008), a negative relationship between the academic performances of the students in high school level and their absence without any excuse was found.

In Turkey, secondary school education covers general high school, Anatolian high school, science high school, religious high school, vocational high school, fine arts high school, and private high school and is compulsory. The students who graduate from these schools have the right to go to the university. The students who want to continue into higher education have to take the university entrance exams YGS ([the transition to higher education examination](#)) and LYS ([undergraduate placement exam](#)) given by the Assessment, Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) and get a certain score. There is an exception for vocational high school graduates. Vocational high school graduates can directly go on to higher vocational schools (two-year vocational colleges) in their respective fields of study. In other words, they can study at two-year vocational colleges without taking any exam. The students can use these rights in case they receive lower grades than the minimum grade required by the departments they would like to prefer in their university examinations. That the students matriculating without examinations dropped the educational quality of the higher institutions has been subject to much discussion. It was determined in some studies that students who

are placed in vocational colleges without examination were less successful in comparison to students matriculating with ÖSYM grades (Karagül, Karagül and Doğan, 2011: Çağlar and Türeli, 2005; Kızgın, 2005; Yıldız, Sönmez and Ciloşoğlu, 2015). In a study conducted by Demir and Çam (2006) in regard to the factors impacting the academic achievements of the students from the department of accounting, it was determined that “losing the unity of purpose in-class due to the entrance systems without an examination” was the third factor that affected success negatively. Kuşat (2014) compared the academic achievements of the students that matriculated to the department of accounting and tax applications in accounting and economics courses, and determined that the students matriculating with examinations had a higher success though they encountered these subjects for the first time. The students think that previous acquirement of basic accounting and mathematics will increase the success in the vocational courses significantly (Kızıl, Çelik, Akman and Danışman, 2015: 143; Kızıl and Gencer, 2016: 87). Based on the results of the studies in the literature, it is thought that the success of the students in vocational courses may be different for the students matriculating without examinations due to having lower motivation towards their courses in comparison with the students matriculating with examinations. Based on the idea that the performances of the students that deserve to enter the vocational college with an entrance exam score and the students that matriculated in this department directly without an exam may be different, the enrollment without examination (or type of high school graduated) is considered as another variable that may impact the student academic achievement.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the academic achievements of the vocational college students in the Corporate Accounting course in terms of their HAs, class attendance and the type of high school graduated and to determine the common impact of these variables on success. Answers to the specific research questions below are sought within the framework of this main purpose;

- Is there a significant difference between the academic achievements of the students in terms of homework assignment variable?
- Is there a significant difference between the academic achievements of the students in terms of the type of high school graduated variable?
- Is there a significant difference between the academic achievements of the students in terms of class attendance variable?

- Are the combined effects of three independent variables (HA, class attendance and type of high school graduated) on the academic achievements of students statistically significant?

3. Method

In this study, a causal-comparative research design was used. This research design is used for the purpose of discovering the cause and effect relationships between dependent and independent variables after an action or event has already occurred (Salkind, 2010). The researchers' aim is to find out whether the independent variable(s) affected the dependent variable(s) by comparing two or more groups of individuals. In this study, a test of 20 questions was applied for the students of the department of accounting and tax applications in the last week of the academic year, 2015-2016 fall semester, and the test results were compared in terms of the variables used in the present study (HA, class attendance and the type of high school graduated). This study used the causal-comparative research design due to being conducted after the event occurred, the researchers not manipulating the variables and the fact that the success was evaluated in terms of cause and effect relationship via determined variables (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun, 2012: 363).

3.1. Study Group

A total of 74 second grade students with 35 males and 39 females studying in the department of Accounting and Tax Applications of Vakfikebir Vocational College in Karadeniz Technical University, took part in the study. The sampling was grouped in terms of studied variables as follows: 38 students doing their HAs and 36 students not doing their HAs; 41 vocational high school graduates and 22 students that are not vocational high school graduates; 14 students attending the classes between 0-5 hours, 4 students attending the classes between 6-10 hours, 35 students attending the classes between 11-15 hours and 21 students attending the classes between 16-20 hours.

3.2. Data Collection Tool

A test with 20 multiple choice questions were used in the study. The questions in the test include the stock companies which is one of the sub-topics of the Corporate Accounting; 15 (75%) of them are about the profit distribution of these companies, and 5 (25%) of them about the establishment, change in capital and liquidation processes. The opinion of another expert that is knowledgeable and with experience on the Corporate Accounting was received apart from the authors for the validation of the questions in

the test. The reliability of the test was calculated by using Kuder-Richardson KR-20 formula and it was determined as 0.84.

3.3. Data Analysis

The sample was separated into two groups in terms of the “HA” which is the first variable of the study. During the semester, the students were asked as a HA to prepare a monograph in regard to the calculation of the profit distributions of the companies with stock companies and to write this monograph without using computer. 38 willing students did the HA. The statistical comparison of the students that did and did not do the HA was made with the use of independent samples t-test.

The second variable of the study was “the type of high school graduated”, and the students were separated into two groups as vocational high school graduates (accepted to university without any exam) and other types of high school graduates (accepted to university by exam). Statistical comparisons between these two groups were done by using independent samples t-test.

The third variable of the study is “class attendance” or “absenteeism” and the students were divided into four groups. This grouping was in students that continue their courses between 0-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-15 hours and 16-20 hours. The statistical comparisons towards this variable were made by using one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA).

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the combined effect of these three variables on the academic achievements of the students. All statistical comparisons were made with SPSS 23 statistic package program.

4. Results

This section contained a summary presentation of the findings obtained from the study. The findings presented under subheadings according to the variables identified in the introduction.

4.1. The Effect of Homework Assignment on Academic Achievement

Independent samples t-test was used to test whether the academic achievements of the students that do and not do their HAs differ and the analysis results are presented in Table I.

Table 1: The results of t-test in terms of homework assignment variable

| Assignment | N | Average | Std. Deviation | df | t | p |
|------------|----|---------|----------------|----|------|--------|
| Did | 36 | 41.84 | 18.83 | 72 | 4.26 | .0001* |
| Did not | 38 | 25.97 | 12.35 | | | |

According to Table 1, 36 students voluntarily prepared the monograph assignment asked from them and 38 students did not do the HA. The average of the grades of 36 students that did their HA and acquired from the test applied at the end of the semester was 41.84 while the 38 students that did not do their HA had it as 25.97. The difference of 15.87 between the two groups' averages were found statistically significant $t(72)=4.26$, $p<.001$.

4.2. The effect of the type of high school graduated on the Academic Achievement

The independent samples t-test was used to compare the test scores of the students from the vocational high school and the students from other high schools. The results obtained from t-test were given in Table 2.

Table 2: The results of t-test in terms of the type of high school graduated variable

| Graduation | N | Avg. | SD | df | t | p |
|------------------------|----|-------|-------|----|------|------|
| Other high school | 22 | 46.82 | 22.49 | 61 | .611 | .544 |
| Vocational high school | 41 | 43.29 | 21.49 | | | |

As can be seen in Table 2, 41 of the students that participated in the study were vocational high school graduates ($X=43.29$) while 22 were other high school graduates ($X=46.82$). The difference between the averages of these two groups were not found statistically significant ($t(61)=.611$, $p>.05$).

4.3. The Effect of Class Attendance on the Academic Achievement

The sample was divided into four groups (A, B, C, and D groups) according to the class attendance level of the students. Mean and standard deviation values for each group were given in Table 3. In addition, ANOVA results for the averages were presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics in regard to the students' attendance to class

| Groups based on their Number of Class Attendance | N | Average (M) | SD |
|---|----|-------------|-------|
| Students' class attending between 0-5 (Group A) | 14 | 25.71 | 15.91 |
| Students' class attending between 6-10 (Group B) | 4 | 31.25 | 13.77 |
| Students' class attending between 11-15 (Group C) | 35 | 45.14 | 20.02 |
| Students' class attending between 16-20 (Group D) | 21 | 48.81 | 24.99 |
| Total | 74 | 37.73 | 18.67 |

As seen in Table 3, the averages increase regularly from Group A (M= 25.71; SD=15.91) to Group D (M=48.81; SD=24.99).

Table 4: ANOVA and Tukey HSD results on the test grades of students in terms of "class attendance" variable

| Source of Variance | Sum of Squares | df | Mean of Squares | F | p | Significant Difference (Tukey HSD) |
|--------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Between Groups | 5490.49 | 3 | 1830.16 | 4.27 | .008* | C-A; D-A |
| Within groups | 29981.13 | 70 | 428.30 | | | |
| Total | 35471.62 | 73 | | | | |

Significant difference at *p<.01 level

According to Table 4, the averages of the groups in Corporate Accounting course is significantly different in terms of the hour of class attendance, $F(3,70)=4.27$, $p<.01$. In other words, the academic achievement varies based on the hour of class attendance. Turkey HSD test, which is one of the post hoc tests, was applied on the data to find between which groups there were differences in academic achievements. According to the results of this test it was determined that the average points of the D group students (Avg.=48.81) and C group students (Avg.=45.14) were significantly higher than the averages of the A group students (Avg.=25.71) (Table 4).

Based on the three variables dealt with in the study, the summary information in regard to the differences in academic achievement was shown in Table 5. Table 5 shows whether there were statistically significant differences between the academic achievements of the students in terms of all the variables used in the study. According to the Table V, the effects of the HA and class attendance on the students' academic achievements are statistically significant while the effect of type of high school graduated is not important ($p=.544$).

Table 5: Results in regard to the relationship between all the variables and academic achievement

| Variables | Groups | N | Average | Level of Significance |
|-------------------------------|--|----|---------|-----------------------|
| Homework Assignment | Did | 38 | 41.84 | .0001* |
| | Did not | 36 | 25.97 | |
| Type of high school graduated | Vocational high school | 41 | 43.29 | .544 |
| | Other high school | 22 | 46.82 | |
| Class Attendance | Students class attending 0-5 times (Group A) | 12 | 25.71 | .008* |
| | Students class attending 6-10 times (Group B) | 4 | 31.25 | |
| | Students class attending 11-15 times (Group C) | 35 | 45.14 | |
| | Students class attending 16-20 times (Group D) | 21 | 48.81 | |

Significant at * $p < .05$ level

4.4. The Combined Effect of the Variables on the Academic Achievement

The multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to determine the combined effects of three independent variables (the HA, class attendance and type of high school graduated) on the academic achievements of students. In other words, it is used to investigate the degree to which the HA, class attendance and type of high school graduated predicts the academic achievement. Table 6 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis.

Table 6: Coefficients for the multiple regression analysis

| Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | p | Zero-order r | Partial R |
|---------------------|-------|------------|-------|------|------|--------------|-----------|
| Constant | 33.51 | 7.08 | - | 4.73 | .000 | - | - |
| Assignment | 13.82 | 4.09 | 0.39 | 3.38 | .001 | 0.45 | 0.38 |
| Type of high school | 0.16 | 4.03 | 0.004 | 0.04 | 0.97 | 0.07 | 0.005 |
| Attendance | 2.56 | 1.95 | 0.15 | 1.31 | 0.19 | 0.29 | 0.15 |

R = 0.47 R² = 0.22
F_(3;70) = 6.60 p = .001

Table 6 shows the regression analysis results in regard to estimating the academic achievement based on HA, being vocational high school graduate and class attendance variables. As can be seen from the table, the common impact of the determined variables on the academic achievement was found significant ($F(3;70)=6.60$; $p < .001$),

with R^2 of .22. As can be seen in Table 6, the zero-order correlations between independent variables and dependent variables changed between 0.07 and 0.45, partial correlations changed between 0.005 and 0.38. The participants' predicted academic achievement is equal to $33.51 + 13.82 (HA) + 0.16 (\text{type of high school}) + 2.56 (\text{class attendance})$. On the other hand, only one of three independent variables is statistically significant: the HA ($p\text{-value} = .001$). When evaluating the standardized beta values, the greatest influence upon the dependent variable (academic achievement) is the HA ($\beta = .39$). The impact of the other variables was not found significant ($p > .01$).

5. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study aims to evaluate the vocational college students' academic achievements in the Corporate Accounting course in terms of three determined variables (HA, class attendance or absenteeism, and type of high school graduated), and to determine the combined effect of these variables on achievement. In the study, variables that are thought to be related with the academic achievement and on which unbiased data can be collected were preferred.

According to the results obtained from the present study, there is a statistically significant difference between the students who do the HA and who do not on their academic achievement. Hence, it can be said that the students who do the HA are more successful in the Corporate Accounting course than those who do not. In other words, doing HAs affect the students' success positively. It is thought that this result is limited to the sample of this study and the Corporate Accounting course but similar results could be obtained in the other related courses and with different students. In the related literature, the positive impacts of HA are gathered under four groups; (i) success and learning, long-term success, non-academic impacts (assuming responsibility, self-management etc.) and family benefits (Cooper, Robinson, and Patall, 2006: 6). Alleman and Brophy (1991), Johnson and Pontius (1989) and Warton (2001) claim that HAs increase the student's attitude towards the school and studying habit and skill. On the other hand, Cooper et al. (2006) stated that HA provides the student with opportunity to self-management and assume responsibility and they suggested that the performance of students' HA increases from primary school through upper classes and that there was a higher correlation between HA and academic achievement in the upper classes than primary education. Also, many studies in the literature have found that doing HA increased students' success (Glazer and Williams, 2001; Gündoğan Özben, 2006; Kaplan, 2006). In other studies, it was found that the time spent on the HA did not

make a difference in student achievement, and that there was a negative relationship between attitudes towards HA and the amount of HA (Gür, 2003).

Another variable of the study is student's class attendance. As can be seen in Table III, as class attendance increases, the achievements of the students increase significantly. This increase is also found significant statistically ($F(3;70)=4.27, p<.01$). Especially in courses such as accounting with numerical content, it is highly difficult for the student to be successful without class attendance. Class attendance does not mean the physical existence of the student in the classroom; it means that the student struggle with the course both mentally and physically. Thus, Schmidt (1983), Park and Kerr (1990), Hammen and Kelland (1994), Gump (2005), and Bostan and Karakaya (2016) also determined in their studies that the success increased as the class attendance increased. There were also some exceptional cases where some of the students with lots of absence were successful in their class, but the rate of students that can be successful without attending the course is very low.

Another research question of the study was that "Is there a significant difference between the academic achievements of the students in terms of the type of high school graduated?" The t-test results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between two groups (vocational high school graduates and other high school graduates) in terms of academic achievement ($t(61)=.611, p>.05$). This result contradicts with the results of some studies in literature. In their studies Çağlar and Türeli (2005), Kızıgın (2005), Karagül et al (2011) determined that the academic achievements of the students enrolling to university with an examination result was higher in comparison to students that are placed in vocational college without examination. The reason for the contradiction between the results of the present study and these three studies could be that these three studies cover all the departments and courses in the vocational colleges but the present study only examined the Corporate Accounting course. However, in the literature, there are studies that support the results of this study. In a study conducted by Kuşat (2014), the success of the students that are graduates and not graduates of vocational high school in general accounting and economics courses were compared. The results of Kuşat's study showed that, although the students that were not vocational high school graduates studied these courses for the first time, there was no statistically significant difference between the successes of two groups. The reason for this may be that vocational high school graduates do not give the necessary attention to the accounting courses in the university because they believe that they learned most of the concepts on this subject in high school. This situation causes the lack of statistically significant difference between the academic achievements between the vocational high school graduates and graduates of other high schools. Demir and Çam (2006) reached a

conclusion that supports this claim. In their studies, they put forth that the most important cause for the failure in the accounting courses was the “students disinterest towards the courses due to feeling confident in their accounting knowledge”. The fact that vocational high school graduates feel disinterested towards their accounting courses due to feeling confident in their accounting knowledge also causes them to fail in their second-year accounting courses as well. The students that are not vocational high school graduates show more interest and tendency towards the courses for having no knowledge in accounting in their high school years. This situation causes the change in averages between two groups in terms of success. Thus, in a comparison made by Yıldız et. al (2015) based on all courses, they determined that students matriculating with examination failed in less classes in vocational courses.

Considering the combined effect of the independent variables used in the study on the academic achievement, the statistically significant effect can be seen in Table 6 ($p < .001$). When the zero-order correlations between the independent and dependent variables in the Table 6 are analyzed, it is seen that there is a medium-level and positive relationship between HA and academic achievement ($r = .45$), a positive and very low relationship between the type of high school graduated and academic achievement, and a positive and low relationship ($r = .15$) between the student’s class attendance and academic achievement. The combined effect of HA, the type of high school graduated, and class attendance variables on the academic achievement of the students was a medium level and statistically significant ($R = .47$, $R^2 = .22$, $p < .01$). As seen in Table 6, three variables explained approximately 22% of the total variance in the academic achievement. This means that there are effects of other variables out of these three variables on the academic achievement. According to the beta coefficient, when the relative order of importance of the independent variables on the academic achievement is analyzed; this order is listed in the order of HA, class attendance and the type of high school graduated. t-test results in Table 6 show that only the HA variable has a significant effect on the academic achievement. It was determined that class attendance and the type of high school graduated had no important impact on the academic achievement. The further studies can investigate the effects of other variables out of these three variables on academic achievement.

In this study, the effect of the type of high school graduated on the students’ academic achievement in the Corporate Accounting course was examined. In subsequent studies, the achievements of students in all courses related to accounting during associate degree education can be evaluated entirely. This would provide more evidence for the effect of entrance system without an exam. Also, the further studies can be conducted with larger groups of students.

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