



## What Are The Factors Reducing the Academic Achievement in a Primary School Located in a Neighborhood With a Low Socioeconomic Status?

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### Abstract

This research was conducted in order to determine the factors negatively affecting academic achievement in a primary school located in a neighborhood consisting of families with low socioeconomic status in the city center of Erzurum, by a teacher working in that school and an academic of Ataturk University in 2011-2012 academic year. Case study was used as a research method, and interview technique as a data collection tool. The research was conducted with the participation of two administrators, eight teachers, five parents and five students from the school. As a result of the study, it was determined that the leading factor that negatively affected the academic achievement in a school located in a neighborhood with low socio-economic status was the socio-economic conditions of the families; which was followed by the settlement of the school, students, parents, teachers, school facilities and some characteristics of school administrators; respectively.

### Keywords

Academic Achievement  
Elementary School  
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### Introduction

Academic achievement in schools is seen as one of the most spectacular attributes by teachers, administrators and parents. Therefore, school administrators and teachers want to raise the academic achievement of their students; while parents want their children to study in schools and in classrooms harboring many academically successful students. The properties of academic achievement such as being a step towards many professions in demand by the public, students being awarded by educational managers for their academic achievement in various platforms, and, its perception of a means of pride both by parents and teachers bring it to the forefront.

When we speak of achievement in education, it usually means the academic achievement that is the skills developed in courses taught in schools and determined with the scores given by teachers and the expression of the acquired knowledge (Carter & Good, 1973). Academic achievement can also be expressed as behavioral changes in all program areas falling outside the psychomotor and sensory development of individuals (Erdoğdu, 2006).

Academic success is primarily considered to be positively associated with intelligence (Yıldırım, 2000). Studies reveal that the academic achievement of adolescents are affected by many factors other than intelligence such as talent, personality, family characteristics, parental education, family income, working mothers, good relationships between parents, the family's interest in the

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student's academic achievement, degree of understanding adolescents and trust in them (Keskin & Sezgin, 2009).

Although the majority of people emphasize the factor of more and regular study for success, students' personality traits such as self-esteem and shyness were also found to affect academic achievement (Yıldırım, 2000). Additionally, academic achievement is also influenced by factors such as; teacher-student motivation (Barlı, Bilgili, Çelik & Bayrakçeken, 2005), characteristics of the school of the students (Özgül, 1974), study habits (Can, 1992), social support (Osseiran - Waines, 1994), test anxiety and loneliness (Yıldırım, 2000). The most important source of social support for students are listed as families, friends and teachers (Yıldırım, 1998).

One of the major factors affecting academic achievement is the socioeconomic status of the family. It has been demonstrated in many studies that there is a relationship between academic achievement and socioeconomic status (e.g.; Gustafsson, 1998; Yang, 2003). Although the studies by Griffith (1996) and Chen & Williams (1996) show that student achievement rises with family-school collaboration rather than the structure of the schools and socio-economic conditions (cited from Kolay, 2004), social sciences indicate a strong correlation between students' test scores and their socioeconomic levels (Konstantopoulos, 2006; White, Reynolds, Thomas & Gitzlaff, 1993).

Parents' level of education, educational resources of students, household goods they have, the quality of the learning environment can be specified as some aspects of the socioeconomic status, and are generally used as an indicator of socioeconomic status (Konstantopoulos, 2006). However, Kalaycıoğlu, Çelik, Çelen & Türkyılmaz (2010), identifies the basic factors determining the socioeconomic status of a household under five main groups with their contents: 1. Education level of household residents, 2. The average monthly income per person, 3. Professions and jobs, 4. owning a house and automobile, 5. Having a dishwasher, a computer, internet connection, a satellite dish, heating system, a DVD player etc.

Home education facilities such as a desk, computer, internet connection, a private room, the educational level of the mother (Gelbal, 2008) and the family's budget share allocated to education (Abbott & Fouts, 2003), which can be handled in terms socioeconomic status category, significantly contributes to success. It is a fact that children living in a low socioeconomic status experience more academic and social difficulties (Bryan, 1999); and receive less social support from their parents (Hashima, 1994).

As seen above in the studies on academic achievement, the focus has been on the reasons arising from students, teachers, families, socioeconomic conditions and schools.

Schools located in neighborhoods consisting almost entirely of households with a low socioeconomic status, though governed by the central province, mostly take place at the bottom in terms of academic achievement. This is the case for the school, which is the subject matter of our study. The reasons for the low academic achievement of a primary school, which is located 5 km far from the city center and took the last place in 2009-2010 academic year, and ranked number 34 in 2010-2011 academic year in SBS (a placement test for 8th graders in Turkey) among 35 primary schools, have been investigated.

It is expected that such a study will provide Ministry of Education with some benefits for program development, identifying service scales for teachers and operations of funds transfer, and with some other benefits that can be used for schools of similar qualities.

### ***Purpose***

This research was conducted in order to determine the factors negatively affecting academic achievement in a primary school located in a neighborhood consisting of families with low socioeconomic status (NWLSS) in the city center of Erzurum, and to develop propositions to improve the academic achievement.

For this purpose, the answer to the question "What are the factors negatively affecting the academic achievement in a primary school located in a NWLSS?" was sought.

## Method

### *Research Design*

In this study conducted to determine the factors that adversely affect academic achievement, case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. A case study is a design that studies a recent case in its own life frame, where the boundary between fact and content is not defined with exact lines, that may be used in cases where multiple data sources are present (Yin, 1984); but that rather seeks to answer the question of how and why, and that can collect in-depth data (Yin, 2003).

After determining the research questions for the study, forms of semi-structured interviews were developed as data collection tool, and the data were collected by applying this form to the selected participants. By analyzing the collected data, negative factors affecting achievement were tried to be revealed, solution proposals to the existing problems were presented in the final stage.

### *Study Group*

The research was conducted in a primary school located in a NWLSS in Erzurum city center with 25 teachers and 550 students. The study group consists of a total of 20 participants, who were selected using purposive sampling on a voluntary basis, including two principals, eight teachers, five students and five parents.

One of the principals was assigned to another school one year ago after having served for twelve years at this school, and the other one has been serving at this school for nearly one year. The parents consisted of a district headman, an imam, the parent-teacher association president, a school furnace man and a worker from the private sector, who previously attended this school, had 2-4 students at this school. The teachers consisted of four classroom teachers, three branch teachers and a guidance counsellor.

The student group of the participants consisted of a total of 5 students including two 4th graders, one 7th grader and two 8th graders. One of them was the school's top scoring student, and the other was the school student representative. Since the aim was to investigate the factors that reduce academic achievement, the other three students were selected from students who remained below expectations in terms of academic achievement. The disadvantage of having a small number of participants was tried to be resolved by increasing the depth of interviews.

### *Data Collection Tools*

Data collection tools were semi-structured interview forms. First draft interview forms were created, and then examined and renovated by two academics, experts in their field, and was re-edited and finalized after having a pilot interview with a teacher, an administrator and a student. The use of guiding questions was avoided in the forms.

### *Data Collection*

Prior to the interviews, the readiness levels of the participants was attempted to be increased by informing them about the study. Environments, where the respondents felt comfortable, were selected and they were not forced to answer the questions reminding that they could answer any questions they wanted, and that they might not answer if they did not want; and they were recorded with their permission. In addition, explanatory questions were also implemented in order for some of the responses given to be understood clearly.

### *Analysis of Data*

Interview recordings were primarily put in writings by transcription. These data were first encoded with the content analysis method, and then these codes were grouped by dividing them into categories. For the sake of brevity, participant explanations were added for the reasons identified by more than four respondents as a factor in failure, and no explanations were added for those identified by fewer than four respondents in the findings.

## Results

As a result of the content analysis, the socio-economic conditions of families were found to be one of the major causes reducing the academic success where the study was conducted. This was followed by the effects of students' attitudes and behaviors, physical structure of the settlement, parents' attitudes and behaviors, the social fabric of the settlement, the characteristics of teachers, the school's physical conditions and school administrators, respectively; and these effects are presented as follows:

### *1. Negative Effects of Families' Socio-Economic Conditions on Academic Achievement*

The participants considered the families' socio-economic conditions as the factor having the greatest impact on low levels of achievement, and expressed the reasons given in the following table:

**Table 1.** Factors Related to the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Family

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
The low educational level of parents	2	5	4	5	16
Low level of family income	2	4	3	5	14
Lack of comfortable study rooms or environments at home for students	2	4	4	3	13
Some students' working in the street jobs	1	2	3	1	7
Many Householders' going out of the city for work	1	2	2	-	5
Many householders' lack of a regular job and income	1	3	-	-	4
Great numbers of children in families	1	2	1	-	4
Lack of internet connection at home	1	-	1	2	4
Students' having to do some houseworks	-	2	1	1	4
Irregular eating habits of students	1	-	-	-	1
Total	12	24	19	17	72

Low educational levels of parents were seen as the most important factor in failure with its sixteen frequencies. Although two students stated that they comprehended the subjects they did not understand at school by asking for the help of their elders, and one of them expressed that the fact that there were no educated people in the family motivated her success with the desire of "being the first educated person in the family"; a low educational level of parents lowers the academic achievement according to the general conviction. In that regard, some of the parents stated that they could not help their children with their classes, while others expressed that children could take the example of their uneducated parents. In addition, some teachers stated that many of the mothers were illiterate and that although more support should be provided to students as required by the new educational program, many of the students were deprived of this opportunity, thus reducing the student achievement.

A total of fourteen participants stated that low income levels reduced success. Most of these respondents stated that educational needs of students could not be met, and one of the principles even said that there were problems in meeting even the most basic needs such as nutrition, and a parent pointed out to the fact that they could not afford the training center for their children due to economic reasons. In contrast, a student and a parent stated that having good economic conditions pushed some students to laziness and reduced children's motivation to study.

While most participants noted that they lacked a room or home environment that students could comfortably study lessons, one parent specified this ratio as 90%, and another parent stated that he himself watched television when his children were studying. Additionally, some of the students stated that their siblings disturbed them while studying, and even the top scoring student of the school indicated that he could be more successful if he had a room of his own.

Seven of the participants said that students' dealing with street jobs such as shining shoes, selling paper tissues and weighing reduced the student achievement. Furthermore, one of the eighth graders explained that he sold paper tissues with his second-grade brother, that they earned approximately 10-15 liras from this job, and that their father did not interfere with this. Also, the district headman expressed that some people wanted their children to work in the streets "with the ambition to make more money in spite of their good economic situation" and with the idea that "my child should get to know the living conditions and know what's what.". Another parent stated that while he returned from work, he saw many children returning home from work, and that the number was now lower compared to the past.

Finally, parents' leaving the city for work is another factor that reduces the success. In this regard, a parent expressed that he was able to come home sometimes once three months, and sometimes six months, while the teachers noted that there was an authority gap at home arising from this situation and that the children could learn bad habits and make bad friends.

### 2. Negative Effects of Student's Profile

In data analysis, factors associated with student profile have been ranked second in terms of reducing the academic achievement. These, together with their frequencies, are as follows:

**Table 2.** Factors Related to Attitudes and Behaviors of Students

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
Students' lack of lesson reviews	-	2	4	4	10
Subversive actions of some students during the course	1	1	1	5	8
Students' wanting to spend time with friends outside the school	-	1	2	4	7
Students' wanting to watch television	1	-	-	4	5
Students' not giving enough importance to education	-	3	2	-	5
The lack of expectations of success in students	1	2	-	1	4
Abstaining from asking questions due to feelings of shyness.	-	-	-	4	4
Students' desperation about success	1	-	-	1	2
Disrespectful behaviors of students towards their teachers	-	1	1	-	2
Reluctance to learn	-	2	-	-	2
Modeling some people they see on TV	-	-	-	1	1
Unable to find enough time to study at home	-	-	-	1	1
Some students' teasing with students who study	-	-	-	1	1
Some students' excessive allocation of time to the internet	-	-	-	1	1
Some students' excessive allocation of time to use mechanical devices	-	-	-	1	1
Total	4	12	10	28	54

With regard to not reviewing the courses at home, the majority of the participating students said that although they made revisions of their courses, their friends mostly failed to review the courses; and parents also reported that most students had a shortcoming in this regard. Additionally, one of the teachers noted that the fact that workbooks were brought to the school without doing the exercises was the most important evidence that they did not do their homework.

Students' actions to prevent the functioning of the course were considered by all the students, one teacher, one parent and one principle as a factor reducing the achievement level. One of the students said that some of their friends were trying to gag in order to be popular among their peers, that this negatively affected the course; while another said that he could not follow the course due to the teasing of his friends. In addition, one of the teachers stated that uninterested students distracted the attention of others. The school principal indicated that the students trying to prevent the teaching

were present in most of the classrooms and that the number of such students was higher compared to other schools.

All students, except one, two parents, and a teacher stated that the request of students to play out prevented them from their classes. The participant, who was the school student representative, expressed that he felt obliged to go out upon the proposal of friends to play games and so he came to the classroom late and could not allocate enough time for classes.

One of the principles and four students stated that wanting to watch television kept the children from studying. One of the students said that he loved watching football matches a lot; even the top scoring student said "Sometimes I feel like watching TV, I wish I never had to do homework at all."

While two parents and three teachers emphasized that students did not give importance to education; one of the teachers determined that this was due to parents' lack of interest in the students.

### *3. Negative Effects of Physical Structure of Settlements*

In data analysis, the following factors relating to the limited facilities and the physical infrastructure of the settlement in which the school was located, have been found to reduce the academic achievement:

**Table 3.** Factors Related to the Physical Conditions of the Settlement

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
Lack of a library, a private teaching institution or a reading room in the neighborhood	1	6	4	4	15
The distance of the neighborhood the school was located in to the city center	2	6	2	2	12
Lack of an internet cafe in the neighborhood	-	4	3	3	10
Having difficulty in reaching the urban facilities	1	3	3	-	7
Lack of a high school in the neighborhood	-	-	3	-	3
Lack of municipal services in the neighborhood	-	1	2	-	3
Lack of proper accommodations for teachers in the neighborhood	1	-	-	-	1
Total	5	20	17	9	51

Fifteen participants argued that lack of a private teaching institution, a library and a reading room reduced the academic achievement. One of the principals stated that there was a big need for such institutions as the students did not have a comfortable study environment at home, while one of the students expressed that they would be more willing to study in the case that these institutions were present in the neighborhood, and another one said that they had difficulty studying at home.

One of the reasons for low academic achievement was seen as the distance of the neighborhood from the city center. This situation, according to one of the students, causes challenges in meeting their educational needs. One of the parents said that this case made it difficult for students to get to school, and another teacher stated that it reduced their willingness to work in the school.

Half of the respondents stated that the lack of an internet cafe in the neighborhood reduced the student success. One of the students pointed out that they had difficulty making research for their homework, another one explained that he sent one of his relatives to an internet cafe in the city center for some types of homework; one of the teachers noted that students needed to make more research due to the new education program, however, an internet cafe for them to make research for their homework, was not present in the neighborhood.

Seven of the participants emphasized the difficulty of access to the opportunities in the city. One of the parents stated that he told his daughter in 7th grade that he would not be able to send her to high school for this reason; while one of the teachers expressed that inconvenient means of transportation to private teaching institutions reduced the academic achievement.

#### 4. Negative Effects of Attitudes and Behaviors of Students' Parents

In this study, negative effects of parents' attitudes and behavior on student achievement takes the fourth place, their frequencies are listed in the following table:

**Table 4.** Factors Related to Parent Attitude and Behavior

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
Indifference of parents to their children	1	6	5	-	12
Parents' ignorance for education	1	6	2	1	10
Families' lack of expectations from education	2	3	2	-	7
Wrong attitudes and ideas of families about education	1	4	-	-	5
Some parents' seeing the work of their children in the street as an advantage	2	-	2	-	4
Parents' despair about the success of their children	1	1	-	-	2
Families' backing up their children in the case of incorrect behaviors against teachers	-	1	1	-	2
Families' not providing their children with the preliminary training before the training at school	-	-	2	-	2
Family pressure on students for success	-	-	-	1	1
Total	8	21	14	2	45

According to the opinions of the participants, the most important factor in failure resulting from parents is the apathy of the families towards the children. One of the most interesting evidences to support this was the fact that two of the five parents, who attended the meeting, remembered the class of their children wrong. One of the parents arguing that parents' apathy towards their children reduced the academic achievement said that his child, who was a fourth grader, was a third grader; and another one was not able to remember what grade his child was at. Many parents and teachers express that parents' indifference was quite influential in failure, with parents fail to express indifference that much influence; one of the parents indicated this ratio as 80%, while one of the teachers argued that parents were totally responsible for this. The guidance teacher and some parents stated that the fact that parent did not award their children for their success reduced the success. The guidance teacher also expressed that the fact that the parents, in spite of their lack of interest in their children, backed up them as if they had been right in the case of problems the students had with their teachers and principals at school, reduced the student success.

Ten of the participants expressed that parents' ignorance of education reduced the success. Some of the parents and teachers note that there were parents not visiting the school to have information about the status of their children, so, that it reduced the motivation of the student, and that the children of the parents frequently visiting the school were more successful.

Parents' having no expectation from education is one the factors in student failure at the school. One of the principles stated that the majority of the parents were of the opinion that "our children are a hopeless case", one of the teachers said that the number of the parents with expectations from education were too little, a parent stated that there were quite a lot of parents that were of the opinion that "What will happen if our children further study?", and another parent said that some parents were against the education of their daughters and that this reduced the success of students.

Problems in some parents' educational approach are also one significant obstacle to academic success. The fact that one of the principles stated that there were parents seeing the time children spent in school as unnecessary is an interesting example for this. While the guidance teacher stated that this wrong approach was due to the parents' lack of sufficient knowledge about the education, another teacher expressed that especially the children of such parents behaved more insensitively towards educational activities and that they quarreled with their teachers.

### 5. Negative Effects of Social Structure of Settlements

A number of factors related to the social structure of the settlement, were determined to be effective in reducing the student achievement. These factors and their frequencies are listed as follows:

**Table 5.** Factors Related to the Social Structure of Residential Units

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
The effects of the people with bad habits on students	1	4	3	-	8
Low number of people to be modelled in the neighborhood	-	4	3	1	8
The social fabric of the neighborhood	1	4	2	-	7
Lack of language skills depending on the different languages spoken in school and at home	1	3	2	-	6
Disconnection of the neighborhood from the city in terms of social interaction	-	3	-	-	3
Being unable to study due to guests coming home	-	1	-	2	3
The lack of integrity in the neighborhood in cultural sense	1	1	-	-	2
Activities held in the neighborhood such as wedding	-	-	-	1	1
Total	4	20	10	4	38

Eight of the participants stated that there were too many people in the neighborhood having bad habits and serving as a bad model. In particular, one of the parents stated that we could see some twelve-year-old children smoking while walking in the neighborhood, and that there were even people using drugs and involved in burglaries.

Lack of model people, who can be good examples for the students in the neighborhood, which is another aspect of the issue above, is seen as another factor that reduces the success. Although one of the students told that he took example of his teacher, and another one told that they had relatives who were doctors, almost all of them stated that there were too few university graduates in the neighborhood, that the people who studied and progressed in their professions moved from there, that no civil servants resided in the neighborhood, so these were important factors in students' failure.

Seven of the participants were of the opinion that the academic achievement fell due to the social fabric of neighborhood that the school was in. One of the teachers told that the neighborhood resembled a village, another one stated that difficulties experienced in the neighborhood caused reluctance among teachers; and the district headman argued that the composition of the neighborhood of people migrating from rural districts of Eastern Anatolia reduced the academic achievement. One of the parents expressed that incidents were experienced almost every day after school in the previous years, and that the police came to school at least every two weeks, but such incidents were reduced significantly.

Finally, six of the participants addressed the problem of language development and lack of vocabulary due to the use of different languages at home and in the school. One of the teachers, in this regard, stated that the mothers of some students could not speak Turkish at all, and that they could not help their children with their courses. Besides this, some participants expressed that many children learned Turkish at nursery or during the first grade of primary school, and that some others learned Turkish by means of television, so, that this situation reduced the student achievement. In contrast to this, all the students asked about their opinions stated that using different languages at home and in the school did not obstruct their comprehension of the courses.



### 6. *Negative Effects of Teachers' Characteristics*

Factors and their frequencies in the study reducing the academic achievement of students in the school with regard to teachers are as follows:

**Table 6.** Factors Related to Teachers

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
Frequent change in teaching staff	1	4	1	1	7
Not understanding the subjects depending on the teacher irritability during the class	-	-	-	4	4
Teachers' lack of interest in students	-	3	1	-	4
Reluctance of teachers to work in this school	-	2	1	-	3
Teachers prejudices about this neighborhood	-	2	1	-	3
Problems that teachers have conveying the information to students	-	1	1	-	2
High number of inexperienced, and temporarily assigned teachers	1	-	-	-	1
Inadequate preparation of teachers to classes	1	-	-	-	1
Teachers' failure to create a democratic environment in the classroom	1	-	-	-	1
Teachers' lack of self-development	1	-	-	-	1
Teachers' failure to motivate students to read books	1	-	-	-	1
Punishments given to students by teachers	-	-	-	1	1
Teachers' hospital visit with official papers	-	-	-	1	1
Using words that students do not understand during the course	-	-	-	1	1
Teachers' ignoring students' understanding of the subject	-	-	-	1	1
Teachers' failure to descend to the level of students who are on low level in the classroom	-	-	1	-	1
Teachers' failure to make students love them enough	-	1	-	-	1
Teachers' not knowing enough of their neighborhood conditions	-	1	-	-	1
Teachers' not handling the course in accordance with the new program	-	1	-	-	1
Total	6	15	6	9	36

Seven of the participants stated that frequent changes in the teaching staff reduced the success rate. One of the teachers explained that he witnessed the change of two principals, four deputy directors and approximately thirty teachers in this school in four years and that virtually no teacher served in this school more than 6-7 years. A student complained "no sooner do we get used to a teacher, than another teacher replaces him." Two classroom teachers stated that, especially in the first stage of primary education, the fact that teachers were appointed to another school before the students he/she started teaching from the first grade graduated from the school reduced the academic achievement, and that during the last four years, only two of the eight classroom teachers taught his/her students up to the fifth grade.

However, almost all of the participants said that they witnessed tremendous dedication and sacrifice of the teachers in the school.

### 7. Negative Effects of School's Physical Conditions

In the data analysis, the following factors have been identified related to reducing effect of physical conditions of the school on academic achievement:

**Table 7.** Factors Related to Physical Conditions of the School

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
The absence of modern educational tools in the classroom	1	3	1	3	8
Lack of a Gym or a multi-purpose hall at school	1	1	3	-	5
Some cold classrooms	1	1	2	-	4
Some overcrowded classrooms	-	2	1	1	4
Lack of a science laboratory at school	1	1	-	-	2
Lack of a school library	-	1	1	-	2
Small classrooms	1	-	-	-	1
Lack of an additional building	1	-	-	-	1
The school garden's open structure to the outside	1	-	-	-	1
Inadequacy of nursery classes	1	-	-	-	1
Lack of painting and technology-design workshops	1	-	-	-	1
Old computer in the school	1	-	-	-	1
Total	10	9	8	4	31

Eight of the participants argued that the lack of modern educational tools in the classrooms reduced the success. Although one of the students, in this regard, stated that this would not affect their success; other students expressed that these tools would increase their success; two of the teachers noted that implementing such tools would make teaching more efficient and enjoyable, and one parent mentioned that students would be connected to school more in the presence of such tools.

There are seven participants who argued that absence of a school gym or a multi-purpose hall would reduce the success rate. According to them, this deficiency causes a number of problems such as hardships in parental education, students' inability to discharge their energy during breaks in cold winter months, inefficiency in physical education classes or negative impact of the classrooms in physical education course on other classrooms, and less connection in students to the school.

### 8. Negative Effects of School Administrators

In the research; the factors that reduce the academic achievement related to school administrators have come in the last place in terms of total frequency, and are as follows:

**Table 8.** Factors Related to the School Administration

	Prin.	Teac.	Par.	St.	Total
Lack of discipline arising from school administrators	1	6	-	1	8
Communication gaps between the school administrators	1	1	1	-	3
School administrators' insufficient establishment of dialogues with the parents	1	1	-	-	2
Insufficient support of school administration for teachers in their problems with parents	-	1	-	-	1
Not forming single-level classes	-	1	-	-	1
Total	3	10	1	1	15

Regarding the opinion that school administration did not exhibit sufficient attitudes in terms of discipline, one of the students stated that some students' wandering outside reduced the success; another one expressed that the students in the classroom took an example of the students outside and could not concentrate on the lesson. Some teachers stated that a disciplined administration would increase the academic achievement, and the guidance teacher articulated that inadequate sanctions on the students that did not obey the rules reduced the achievement. On the contrary, one of the parents stated that in previous years the parents visiting the school said "What kind of a school is this?" (in a neglected and bad sense); however that the parents generally liked the school in terms of discipline.

## Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, we attempted to determine the factors that reduce the academic achievement at a primary school in a neighborhood with a low socio-economic status in Erzurum. According to the data analysis, it was determined that the factor that affected the academic success most was the lower socio-economic conditions of families. It is followed by the factors such as the school's student profile, physical characteristics of the residential unit and the parents' attitudes and behaviors. These factors are followed by the social fabric of the settlement, teachers and the physical conditions of the school, which can be said to have a medium-level impact, and school administrators were in the last place.

It is a known fact that the socio-economic level of the family is effective on the success of students. Students are considered to be affected by the socio economic characteristics (Özbaş, 2013). In particular, Turkey is one of the three countries among OECD countries where there is the strongest association between socioeconomic status and academic achievement (OECD, 2010). The socioeconomic status of a family can be measured by education levels of family members, their purchasing power and spending, social circles, their home environment, the number of individuals in families and so on (Gelbal, 2008). A high level of socioeconomic status have an effect on schools' academic achievement (Yanpar, 1994), higher transition rates to universities (Ekinci, 2009), the level of learning (Ministry of Education, 2005), and even on a richer vocabulary of students (Davaslıgil, 1980; Büyükkantarçioğlu, 1992). The data obtained from this research can be interpreted that socio-economic opportunities increased academic achievement and that socioeconomic deprivation suppressed it.

Educational levels of the parents of students in the school where the study was conducted were generally low. In fact, the number of non-literate mothers is considerably high. The low educational level of parents, one of the elements of socio-economic status was not only considered important by all the parents but, it became the item with the highest total frequency. Gelbal (2008), Güngör (2009) and Öztürk (2010) found that the education level of mother had the most significant impact on children's success while Keskin & Sezgin (2009) and Güvendir (2014) found that father's education level had a greater impact on the children's success. Hortaçsu (1995) expressed that the teaching and guiding role of the parents with a high level of education is an important factor in increasing the academic achievement. On the other hand, the low educational level of the parents may cause a two-way problem such as inadequate importance given to education in the family or being unable to support the education of their children due to their insufficiency (Connel et al, 1991). Because, no matter how much parents care about their children, they will not be able to help their children with a subject they do not know.

One of the most important causes of low academic achievement in socio-economic sense is the low low-income levels of the families. The fact that the 14 of the participants considered the income level important in terms of academic achievement is quite a high rate. This case brings about many other socio-economic deficiencies such as temporary employment of householders in different cities, having no regular income, employment of children in street jobs, having no rooms or environment that they can study comfortably at home, having no balanced and regular nutrition and absence of computer-internet facilities. In this regard, Dursun (2004) states that the children of the families with a better economic status can be more successful. Tezcan (1999), argues the low income level of the family causes deficiencies in meeting the biological needs of the children such as diet, heating, cleaning, dressing, and that this also decelerates mental development and therefore affects success. Additionally in this regard, Gelbal (2008) determined that the more facilities students had at home, the more successful they became; and Shiqi (2006) found that the students with inadequate facilities at home had low reading scores.

Another fact determined by the study is the fact that the children in this family, with a level of income, were involved in street jobs such as paper tissue selling, shoe polishing or weighing. It is inevitable for a student who feels financial difficulties of his family on his/her shoulders to have a lack

of motivation for academic success. In this regard, Kurtkan (1972) stated that low income levels caused the children to work in the street and determined that there was a strong correlation between the father's job and the student's academic achievement; Yıldırım (2006) expressed that daily hassles of students should be reduced in order to increase the academic achievement.

In this study, a crowded family was also determined to reduce the academic achievement. In this regard, Banks (1972) and Gelbal (2008) stated that uncrowded families were more advantageous in that they provided a language power that would make the children become more successful, and that poor housing and crowded home environment reduced their success levels preventing them from doing their homework, reading books and playing constructing games. Also Cam (2006) stated that the achievement levels reduced as the number of family members increased.

The second factor behind the low academic achievement in the study determined to be the student profile. In literature, there are many studies showing that students' attributions are effective in academic achievement. E.g.: (Ekici, 2003; Hollingsworth & Hoover, 1999; Nartgun & Çakır, 2014). Students living in a NWLSS mostly live in houses, in the form of a two-storied slum, with gardens and empty space that they can play a variety of street games around. This condition brings about the environments that some students can easily go out and have fun playing until late at night, and develop uncontrolled relationships with their peers. Such interactions unavoidably affect the student profile.

Allocating insufficient time to lessons at home, friends inviting them to play while studying, preferring to watch TV rather than study lessons and acquiring bad friends reduce their success. These results are consistent with the those of Can (1992) in that academic achievement is associated with study habits; with those of Yanpar (1994) in that there is a high correlation between the ways of studying outside classes in schools with a low socioeconomic status and the academic achievement; with those of Aral & Aktaş (1997) in that children spend most of their remaining time after school watching television while the children of the families in an upper socio-economic level spend more time studying lessons; with those of Smith & Niemi (2012) in that student achievement increases in direct proportion to the time they allocate to studying lessons; and with those of Yıldırım (2006) in that peer support predicts academic achievement.

Additionally, reasons such as students' not giving adequate importance to education, having no expectations from education, sabotaging the courses, distracting the attention of his/her friends, hesitation to ask question for fear of being mocked by his/her friends, low levels of interest and motivation in the lesson also reduce success. In parallel with these, Ağbuğa (2011) determined that increased level of expectations also increased the participation in the lesson and lowered the disturbing behaviors in the classroom; Acar (1986) found that it was usual for the students not devoting him/herself to lessons and uninterested in lessons to have a low level of achievement; and Yıldırım (1999) ascertained that some students were not able to receive enough support from his/her peers. In addition, Nartgün & Çakır (2014) stated that students were more successful in fulfilling their academic tasks as their motivation level, which means the whole of the behaviors and expectations, increased; and Colengo (1997) expressed that students could exhibit maladaptive behaviors in the case of a lack of academic motivation.

Research data shows that another factor reducing the academic achievement in school is the physical and social structure of the settlement. Although physical structure came the third, and social structure came fifth in terms of frequency, they are the factors that affect the academic achievement most when the physical and social conditions of the settlement that the school is located are considered together. Just as the human spirit is affected by the body, and the body by the spiritual structure; physical conditions of the residential units influence the socio-cultural fabric, and its socio-cultural fabric influences the physical structure. It has been demonstrated with various studies that the development level of the province that the school is in, is effective on student achievement (E.g. Goddard et al, 2000; Odden & Picus, 2000).

Absence of a library, a private teaching institution, a high school, internet cafe and a reading room in the neighborhood, difficulties in accessing educational and research opportunities due to the neighborhood being far from the city center and insufficiencies in municipal services are considered as important barriers rising in front of the academic achievement. Considering that students do not have an environment that they can study and make research comfortably at home, it is quite obvious that such facilities are extremely needed. In addition, the absence of such facilities may reduce the motivation of students. In this context, Arabacı (2010) stated that the school environment has an influence on the behaviors, studies and learning efficiency of both the teaching staff and students; Yıldırım (2013) stated that private teaching institutions (classrooms) have decisive role on the scores that students receive; Baran & Altun (2014) stated that private teaching institutions increased the academic achievements of students; Butlin (1999), UNESCO (2005) and Pakır (2006) stated that socioeconomic status and their geographic localizations have a decisive nature in the passage to higher education; and Ekinçi (2011) stated that educational opportunities of the residential units play an effective role in continuing higher education.

Negative elements existing in the social fabric of the neighborhood are also a reason for failure. The small number of good models compared to the big number of bad models around the students, speaking different languages at home and in the school, migration from rural areas and absence of a cultural integrity in the neighborhood can be counted among these them. In parallel to this; Tezcan (1999), expressed that the social environment will limit the child in terms of achievement and the choice of profession by determining the people they will meet and their opportunities of mental-intellectual skills development. Ural (2012) stated that it was difficult for immigrant to develop a sense of common identity, which indicates that the complex social structure in the neighborhood having no integrity reduces academic achievement. Furthermore the statement of Bese (2006) that there might be environments leading to crime in the case of inadequate urbanization in physical and social sense, and that rates of disorder and crime would increase in the transition areas where there is a dense population of immigrants, is consistent with the findings of this study.

Regarding the deficiencies arising from parents' attitudes and behaviors, the fact that all the participating parents stated that indifference of parents played an important role in failure is a significant example of self-criticism. In addition, parents' lack of expectations from education, ignorance of education, encouraging the children to work outside school and desperation about their children's success are among the other factors. In parallel to these, Diaz (1989) determined that the most distinctive feature of the students with low academic achievement was parents' lack interest; Yıldırım (2006) showed in his study that family support was the first factor and family distress, the second factor that predicted achievement.

Furthermore, two of the parents stated that families were not able to educate their children in the pre-school period, which is factor that reduces students' level of readiness. This case is consistent with the idea of Bloom (1979) that students' entry behaviors and backgrounds play an important role in the quality of teaching; of Yanpar (1998) that the strongest variable that predicts level of learning is pre-learning; of Çelenk (2003) that the achievement levels of the children receiving educational support from family members is higher; of Gordon (1993) that family plays an important role in determining the educational identity of the child during the 0-6 years period, in which the basics of personality development are established.

Regarding the deficiencies in parents' education; their blaming school staff and backing up their children even if they exhibit incorrect behavior reduce the prestige of education in the eye of students, and decreases teacher motivation and academic achievement. Additionally, their absence of expectations from their children's education, negative attitudes developed by some parents toward the school and teachers are also another factor that reduces the success. Regarding these issues, Çelenk (2002) argues that the academic achievement of the children of the families who are in cooperation with the school increases; Yanpar reports that Edmonds (1979), Brookover & Lezotte (1979), and

Rutter, Maughan, Ouston & Smith (1997) also argue that schools supported by the neighborhood and parents' interest in their children on an adequate level will influence learning in a positive way.

The findings of the research show that, due to frequent change in teaching staff, teachers cannot get to know the environmental conditions and students well enough, cannot develop an adequate level of responsibility and thus students also have difficulty in getting used to their teachers. For example, Social Studies, Turkish, Religion and Visual Arts teachers in the school came from other school on temporary assignment. It was also determined that some teachers came to the school with biases, were reluctant for success and got angry during the lesson, which disrupted the motivation of the students. These findings, which indicates a lack of motivation in teachers, are consistent with those of Barlı et al. (2005) that the motivation levels of teachers who worked in places with low socio-economic status in Erzurum were lower than those of others; with those of Yıldırım (2006) that the factor affecting academic achievement in high school students in the first place was teacher's support; with those of Morrison et al (1997) that the factor increasing the academic achievement of 7th and 8th graders most was teacher and family support, and that a school environment where teachers were inconsiderate and rude would negatively affect the student achievement.

According to these findings, inadequacy of the library, absence of a laboratory, projectors and inadequate level of computer and internet facilities in the school are among the causes of low academic achievement. These findings are consistent with those of Turnuklu, Zoraloglu & Gemici (2001) showing that disciplinary problems will increase due to the lack of teaching materials, and therefore achievement level will decrease. Yanpar (1998) and Özdemir et al. (2010) argue that school's educational facilities and physical environment affect school success. With regard to the physical condition of the school, lack of a gym or multipurpose hall may cause limitations both in student motivation and in parents' education. In addition, some classes being cold or crowded lowers motivation of students and teachers. These findings are consistent with those of Tapan (2006) showing that premises have a limiter or supportive effect on the activities held in the school; with those of Aydoğan (2012) showing that classroom populations affect achievement, that students in classroom of 13-17 people are more successful than those in classrooms of 22-25 people, and that heating, lighting and auditory characteristics of the school building affect learning processes, and the motivations of students and teachers. The meta-analysis study of Bosker & Witziers (1996) conducted over 103 studies on the impact of school also shows that 18% of the difference in student achievement is due to the characteristics of the school.

The findings indicate that the lowest share in the low academic achievement of the school belongs to the school administration. Sub-headings in this matter are listed as administrators' lack of discipline, their failure to impose sanction when students do not obey the rules, administrators' lack of communication among themselves and their lack of adequate communication with parents. In this context, Bailey (2007) and Çelikten (2005) also pointed to the role of school principals in student achievement. Özbaş & Badavan (2009) determined that administrators did not contribute to the academic achievement of the students without establishing sufficient communication with the families, and stated that an effective school life would not be able to be created without solving disciplinary problems in the school.

However, there are some limitations to this study. Firstly, the categories determined in the study are composed of interconnected areas. For example, some codes seen as physical and social impact of the settlements in this study can also be considered as an aspect of socio-economic factors. Therefore, the frequencies seen in the findings should not be considered absolute and final values. The fact that the study was conducted on a single school, a total of twenty participants to facilitate the feasibility of the study, and the number of participating students limited to five are among other limitations. Furthermore, although students that could express their ideas freely were selected and measures were taken for the students to feel comfortable; the fact that the researcher carrying out the interviews was a teacher working in the same school may have prevented the students from articulating their thought easily.

In the light of the findings obtained from the study, the following propositions have been brought to improve the academic achievement in this school located in a NWLSS:

Considering many students do not have an appropriate environment to study at home, facilities such as a library or a reading room can be created in the neighborhood, where they can study lessons or read books in the remaining time from school. An appropriate study environment in the school can be prepared for students without a proper study environment at home. In addition, students with bad habits can be rehabilitated by opening a gym in the neighborhood, and their interests can be channeled into sports. Students can be encouraged to study by motivating them with different activities such as after school studies, extracurricular activities, homework checks, rewards or punishments.

In order to increase the parent-school collaboration, teachers can be encouraged to visit parents with administrators. Organizations of school development programs can help parents develop more positive attitudes towards their children, education, the school and teachers; establish better communication with their children; and be motivated for their children's academic achievement. Dissuasive sanctions can be imposed on parents who encourage their children to work in the street.

Joint studies can be carried out for students who frequently sabotage lessons with the cooperation of guidance teacher, school administration, parents and students and effective punishments can be applied. Experiences, in which students can sufficiently taste the pleasure of success, can be created by teachers and parents in order to contribute to the academic personality development of the students and to motivate them in terms of achievement. In addition to the enrichment of the school in term of course materials and tools and computer technologies; lessons can be taught at a higher quality reducing the number of students in classrooms. In-service training courses on classroom management can be provided for teachers.

In order to enhance teacher motivation and to have them serve in the school for a long time without asking to be appointed; a school culture can be formed by organizing various activities and school facilities can be improved by building housings for teachers. Courses or seminars can be organized on communication skills and school management issues for school principals.

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