The Investigation of the Relationship between the Students' Perceptions about the Classroom Assessment Environment and Their Achievement-Goal Orientations: Gender Perspective

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Abstract

Within the scope of the study, the achievement-goal orientations of the 7th and 8th grade elementary students and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment were determined within the context of Science and Technology Course. Moreover, the relationship between these variables were determined and it was investigated whether the gender cause a significant difference between the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment. This study was designed in accordance with the correlational research design and the sample of this study was composed of 369 students who were 7th and 8th graders in 3 different state elementary schools. In order to investigate whether the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment differ in terms of gender, MANOVA (multivariate ANOVA) was used. In conclusion, in this study, the following aspects were determined; there was a strong relationship between the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations; the gender variable didn't cause a significant difference in students' achievement-goal orientations but it caused a significant difference in their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment.

Introduction

An inseparable part of the instruction process (Linn, 1990), assessment activities have an effect on students' motivational characteristics such as their learning approaches (Struyven, Dochy & Janssens, 2005), their achievement-goal orientations (Ames, 1992; Brookhart, 1997) and their self-efficacies (Bandura, 1993) as well as their cognitive characteristics such as learning and achievement (Black & William, 1998; Brookhart & DeVoge, 1999). McMillan & Workman (1998) states that the motivation of the students can be increased through some points such as being clear about how to assess the learning, giving feedback to the students, showing students how to improve their learning by using their mistakes, using multiple assessment techniques instead of one, using the authentic

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assessment tasks which are related to the real life and announcing the criteria used during the assessment of their tasks in the process of assessment activities.

One of the motivational beliefs that the students have is their achievement-goal orientations. Defining the achievement-goal as the "integrated pattern of beliefs, attributions and affect that produce intentions of behavior" (p. 261), Ames (1992) states that the achievement-goal orientations of the students are affected by the assessment practices. In parallel with this view, Brookhart (2004) expresses that every class has its own assessment "character" or "environment" sourced from the teachers' assessment practices and argues that the students' perceptions about this environment may affect their motivational beliefs. In the light of these two theoretical explanations, many studies were conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between the assessment practices and students' achievement-goal orientations (Alkharusi, 2007; Archer & Scevak, 1998; Church, Elliot & Gable, 2001; Maslovaty & Kuzi, 2002; Stefanou & Parkes, 2003; Wang, 2004). The results of the researches reveal that there is a relationship between the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations. On the other hand, the gender variable stands out both in the researches related to the students' motivations such as achievement-goal orientations (Musa, 2013) and in the researches about the investigation of their perceptions about the assessment practices (Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani & Alkalbani, 2013).

In the light of the explanations mentioned above, within the scope of this research, the 7th and 8th grade elementary students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment were revealed and the relationship between these two variables was investigated. Also, in the research, it was investigated whether the gender cause a significant difference in these two variables or not.

Achievement-Goal Orientation

Achievement goal was defined as the reasons or aims of the students for demonstrating a behavior by Midgley et al. (1998). The theory of achievement-goal orientation aiming at determining the achievement goals of the students deals with the reasons behind the way the students follow to succeed (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999). The types of achievement goal orientation were classified into two categories (Ames, 1992) early on as learning and performance goals or task-involvement and ego-involvement goals (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). Most commonly used classification among them was the concepts of learning and performance goals (Pintrich, Conley & Kempler, 2003). Because of the reason that the dual model was too general and it caused a confusion (Elliot & Church, 1997; Middleton & Midgley, 1997), these dual classification used for achievement goal orientation was enhanced into three categories by Elliot & Harackiewicz (1996). According to this, the performance goals were divided into two categories and they were called as performance approach and performance avoidance goals. As can be seen, in this classification, while the performance goals were divided into two, learning goals had one dimension. In their research presenting a new classification of the achievement goal orientations, Elliot & McGregor (2001) divided learning goals into two categories as learning approach and learning avoidance and brought out a four categorization. The goals of the students who adopted different types of achievement-goal orientations are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The Goals Adopted in Accordance with Different Achievement Goal Orientations

The types of achievement-goal orientations	The goal adopted
Learning-approach	To improve the level of competence, learning the subject meaningfully and completely.
Learning-avoidance	To avoid learning short-comings, misunderstanding and not mastering the tasks.
Performance-approach	To prove his/her skills and getting higher marks than the others.
Performance-avoidance	To avoid making a fool of himself/herself or to seem incompetent.

It is remarkable that the students with different achievement goal orientations have quite different goals. This is very important for the students' academic lives because the researchers express that while the students with learning goal orientation are stronger in the face of a difficulty and seek for challenges, the students with performance goal orientation are less resistant to the difficulties, avoid the challenges and aims at succeeding with less efforts (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986). Pintrich (2000) states that in some cases, the students may adopt more than one goal orientations. For example, in some cases, students may want both to really learn the subject and to perform better than his/her classmates. From this point, Dweck & Leggett (1988) indicates that the learning and performance goals should be coordinated properly.

Classroom Assessment Environment

Re-defining the concept of classroom assessment environment which was first defined by Stiggins & Conklin (1992), Brookhart (1997) defined the classroom assessment environment as an environment which is experienced by the students in different ways in accordance with the teacher's assessment activities such as the determination of assessment purposes and tasks, organization of the assessment criteria and standards, providing feedback and presenting the assessment results. While Stiggins & Conklin (1992) argue that the classroom assessment environment has eight components, Brookhart (1997) states that this environment has five components which are the aim of the assessment, the selection of the assessment methods, the organization of the performance criteria and standards, giving feedback and monitoring outcomes. These components of the classroom assessment environment generally vary in accordance with the teachers' practices and the students perceive different assessment environments because of the varying assessment practices.

When the different types of classroom assessment environments are reviewed, the theoretical explanations about this topic (Ames, 1992; Brookhart, 1997; McMillan & Workman, 1998) are generally observed to be divided into two categories as "learning oriented" and "performance oriented" (Alkharusi, 2011). The researchers express that the focus is on the students' learning and the assessment practices are used as a tool to increase the student improvement (Wang, 2004), the assessment tasks that are meaningful and help the students improve their achievement are present, the students are given informative feedback and help them improve their performance in learning-oriented assessment environments (Alkharusi, 2011). On the other hand in performance oriented classroom assessment environment, the exams are important and the focus is on the students' scores (Wang, 2004). In this type of assessment environments, there are difficult and meaningless assessment tasks and the assessment criteria and standards hard to achieve. Moreover, the grades rather than the learning are important and the students are consistently compared to each other (Alkharusi, 2011).

The Purpose and the Significance of the Study

The earlier studies (Alkharusi, 2007; Church et al., 2001; Maslovaty & Kuzi, 2002; Stefanou & Parkes, 2003; Wang, 2004) and the theoretical explanations about the relationship between the assessment practices and the achievement-goal orientations (Ames, 1992; Brookhart, 1997; McMillan &Workman, 1998) demonstrate that there is a significant relationship between the different assessment types used in instruction process and classroom assessment environment perceptions and the students achievement goal orientations. As a result of the studies, a positive relationship between the perceptions about the learning-oriented assessment environment and learning-oriented goals is determined (Church et al. 2004; Wang, 2004). On the other hand, many researchers reveal that there is a significant relationship between the perceptions about the performance-oriented (praise, public, harsh oriented) assessment environments and performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals (Alkharusi, 2007; Alkharusi, 2009; Church et al., 2001; Wang, 2004).

On the other hand, the gender stands out as an important variable both in the studies about achievement-goal orientation (Musa, 2013) and in the studies which investigate the students' perceptions about the assessment practices (Alkharusi et al., 2013). In the studies investigating the relationship between the gender and the achievement goal orientation, different results related to different types of achievement-goal orientations are determined. For example, in some researches, it is determined that the girls adopt learning goals more (Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Gherasim, Butnaru, Mairean, 2013; Pajares, Britner, Valiante, 2000; Steinmayr, Bipp & Spinath 2011) and boys adopt performance goals more (Middleton & Midgley 1997; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Freudenthaler, Spinath & Neubauer 2008). In some other researches, it is stated that there is no significant difference between girls and boys in terms of performance goals (Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Musa, 2013).

In the studies investigating the relationship between gender and the students' perceptions about the assessment tasks and classroom assessment environment, different results are obtained. Investigating the students' perceptions about the assessment tasks, Gao (2012) determines a difference in favor of boys in terms of the authenticity dimension which is one of the five dimensions of the perceptions about the assessment tasks, and he also determined a difference in favor of girls in terms of the transparency. In a similar research, Dhindsa, Omar & Waldrip (2007) state that there are significant differences according to gender in terms of the dimensions of being congruence with planned learning and transparency. In the researches directly investigating the relationship between the classroom assessment environment and gender, the girls are determined to be more inclined to learn more about the classroom assessment environment than boys (Alkharusi et al., 2013). In a similar research, Alkharusi (2011) reveals that the girls perceive the classroom assessment environment as learning-oriented and the boys perceive it as performance-oriented at significantly higher levels.

As can be seen in the relevant literature, a significant relationship between the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment stands out. Moreover, the gender is focused in many researches as an important variable both for achievement-goal orientation and classroom assessment environment. Although it is a frequently studied topic in international literature, it is observed that there is no research investigating these relationships within a Turkish sample. For this reason, within the scope of the study, the achievement-goal orientations of the 7th and 8th grade elementary students and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment were determined within the context of Science and Technology Course. Moreover, the relationship between these variables were determined and it was investigated whether the gender cause a significant difference between the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment. The research problems of the study are as follows:

Problem 1. Is there a difference between the elementary students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment in terms of the gender?

Problem 2. Is there a difference between the elementary students' achievement-goal orientations in terms of the gender?

Problem 3. What kind of relationship between the elementary students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations is there?

Method

The Research Model

This study was designed in accordance with the correlational research design, one of the relational research methods (Frankael & Wallen, 2009). As it is well known, correlational studies are the ones where the researchers reveal the correlations between two or more variables by correlational statistics without controlling or manipulating them (Creswell, 2005). In this research, since the relationship between the variables was aimed to be revealed, the model based on the correlational research design.

Population and Sample

While the population of this study was composed of seventh and eighth graders of state elementary schools in the central district of Sivas Province in Spring Semester of 2012-2013 Academic year, the sample was composed of 385 seventh and eighth graders of three different state elementary schools. But 12 students didn't fill in the forms completely and outliers were determined in 4 students' forms in the outlier's analysis; therefore, these forms were excluded and the study was conducted with the data of 369 students. The participants were selected via convenience sampling technique and 46.6% were girls (n=183) and 50.4% were boys (n=186). Moreover, 57.6% were 7th graders (n=211) and 42.8% were 8th graders (n=158).

Data Collection

In order to determine the students' achievement-goal orientations, "The Achievement Goal Questionnaire (AGQ)" which was developed by Elliot & McGregor (2001) and adapted into Turkish by Şenler & Sungur (2007) was used. AGQ is composed of 15 items and four dimensions which are learning-approach, learning-avoidance, performance-approach and performance-avoidance. Also, in order to determine the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment, "Students' Perceptions of the Classroom Assessment Environment Scale (SPCAES)"which was developed by Alkharusi (2011) and of which Turkish adaptation was carried out by Buldur & Doğan (2014) was used. SPCAES is composed of 15 items and two factors. The first factor consisting 8 items is named as "learning-oriented assessment environment" and the second factor consisting of 7 items is named as "performance-oriented assessment environment".

Data Analysis

In order to investigate whether the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment differ in terms of gender, MANOVA (multivariate ANOVA) was used. There are alternative tests to investigate this relationship but since there is a high probability of doing type I error in independent samples t-test, MANOVA is much stronger statistical technique in researches which have more than one independent variables (Pallant, 2007). Therefore, MANOVA was used in this research since it met the assumptions.

Before performing the MANOVA test, whether the assumptions were met or not was determined. Field (2009) states that to be able to perform MANOVA, the assumptions about the independence of observations, normality, homogeneity of the error variances of the dependent variables and the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices has to be met. To provide the independence of the observations, it was ensured for each participant to take part in the sample only once and not to be affected by the data obtained from other participants. Secondly, the assumption of normality was tested by Kolmogorov Smirnov test but the results of the analysis showed that the variables demonstrated a deviation from the normal distribution in terms of some sub groups. Stevens (1996) expresses that the type I error is determined to be resistant against the violation of multivariate

normality in many researches (as cited in: Başol, 2013). Because of the skewness and kurtosis coefficients and the relevant information obtained from the literature, it was decided that the data of the some sub-groups which display deviance from the normal distribution according to the normality test could be analyzed via MANOVA on the condition that the other assumed criteria were met. The third assumption to be met was the homogeneity of error variance of the dependent variables and it was tested by Levene F test. Levene F test results showed that the assumption of homogeneity was met. Finally, the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was tested by Box M test. The results showed that the scores of the dependent variables were equal to the covariance matrices. As a result, MANOVA was used since the assumptions were met.

Additionally, within the scope of the study, in order to investigate the properties of the linear relationship between the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. All of the analyses within the study based on $p<.01$ significance level.

Findings

In this section, the findings about whether the participants' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations differed in terms of the gender are dealt. Afterwards, there are the findings about the relationship between the participants' achievement goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment.

Findings Related to the Differences between the Genders in terms of the Perceptions of the Classroom Assessment Environment

With the aim of investigating whether the perceptions of the participants about the classroom assessment environment differed in terms of the gender or not, a MANOVA was conducted. Before performing the MANOVA, the assumptions under the title of data analysis were examined and it was determined that the results of the homogeneity of the variances test ($p>. 01$) and the results of the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices test (Box M test=6.56, $p>.01$) met the assumptions. The distribution of the students' average scores related to the types of the classroom assessment environments in terms of the gender is demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. The Distribution of the Students' Average Scores Related to the Types of the Classroom Assessment Environments in terms of the Gender

Categories	Girl			Boy			Total		
	M	df	N	M	df	n	M	df	n
Learning-oriented assessment environment	4.26	0.47	183	4.21	0.53	186	4.23	0.50	369
Performance-oriented assessment environment	2.32	0.78	183	2.72	0.90	186	2.52	0.86	369

When the Table 2 is reviewed, it stands out that the boy and girl students' scores related to the perceptions about the learning-oriented assessment environment are quite close but there is a difference in their scores related to the perceptions about the performance-oriented assessment environment. According to results of the MANOVA test, aiming at comparing the boy and girl students' average scores related to the learning-oriented and performance-oriented assessment environment, it was determined that there was a difference between the boy and girl students' scores related to the perceptions about the classroom assessment environment sub-factors (Wilks' Lambda=0.95; $F(2,366)=10.54$; $p<.01$; Eta-Square=.05). According to the results of the pair wise multiple comparisons aiming at determining which sub-factors differed, it was determined that there wasn't a significant difference in the scores related to the learning-oriented assessment environment in terms of gender but there was a significant difference in the scores related to the performance-oriented assessment environment in terms of gender ($p<.01$). When the average scores of boy and girl students was examined, it was observed that the boys significantly perceived the classroom assessment environment as performance-oriented compared to girls. However, according to the effect size value calculated to investigate the effect of the differences between the groups on practice, it was observed

that the gender had a low effect on the perceptions about the classroom assessment environment (Pallant, 2007).

Findings Related to the Differences between the Genders in terms of the Adopted Achievement Goal Orientation

With the aim of investigating whether the participants' achievement-goal orientations differed in terms of the gender, MANOVA test was used. Before conducting the MANOVA, the assumptions under the section of data analysis was examined and it was determined that the results of the homogeneity of the variances test ($p > .01$) and the results of the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices test (Box M test=9.48, $p > .01$) met the assumptions. The distribution of the students' average scores related to the types of the achievement-goal orientations in terms of the gender is demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3. The Distribution of the Students' Average Scores Related to the Types of the Achievement-Goal Orientations in terms of the Gender

Categories	Girl			Boy			Total		
	M	**df**	**n**	**M**	**df**	**n**	**M**	**df**	**n**
Learning-approach	4.72	0.47	183	4.66	0.54	184	4.69	0.50	367
Learning-avoidance	3.37	1.06	183	3.46	1.20	184	3.41	1.13	367
Performance-approach	4.44	0.70	183	4.41	0.72	184	4.42	0.71	367
Performance-avoidance	3.64	0.86	183	3.78	0.85	184	3.70	0.86	367

When the Table 3 is reviewed, it stands out that the scores of boy and girl students are close to each other in terms of the achievement-goal orientation sub-factors. According to the MANOVA test conducted with the aim of comparing the average scores of the achievement-goal orientations of the boy and girl students, it was determined that there was no significant difference between boy and girl students' average scores on achievement-goal orientations (Wilks' Lambda=0.98; $F_{(4,362)}=1.34$; $p > .01$).

Findings on the Relationship between the Perceptions of the Classroom Assessment Environment and Achievement Goal Orientations

In order to investigate the relationship between the students' perceptions about the types of classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations, the correlation coefficients were calculated and the results are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Findings on the Relationship between the Students' Perceptions about the Types of Classroom Assessment Environment and Their Achievement-Goal Orientations

	Learning-oriented assessment environment	Performance-oriented assessment environment	Learning-approach	Learning-avoidance	Performance-approach	Performance-avoidance
Learning-oriented assessment environment	1	-.03	.38*	.11	.25*	.11
Performance-oriented assessment environment		1	-.16*	.28*	.06	.23*

* $p < .01$

As can be viewed in Table 4, while there is a moderate, positive and significant (r=.38; *p*<.01) relationship between the students' perceptions about the learning-oriented classroom assessment environment and their learning approach achievement-goal orientations, there is a weak, positive and significant (r=.25; *p*<.01) relationship between the performance-approach goals. There is no statistically significant relationship between the perceptions about the learning-oriented assessment environment and learning-avoidance (r=.11; *p*>.01) and performance-avoidance (r=.11; *p*>.01) goal orientations.

It can be observed that there is a weak, negative and significant (r=-.16; *p*<.01) relationship between the participants' perceptions about the performance-oriented assessment environment and their learning-approach goal orientations, and there is a weak, positive and significant relationship between their learning-avoidance (r=.28; *p*<.01) and performance-avoidance (r=.23; *p*<.01) goals. There is no statistically significant relationship between the performance-oriented assessment environment perceptions and performance-approach goal orientation (r=.06; *p*>.01). Similarly, there is no statistically significant relationship between the learning-oriented assessment environment perceptions and performance-oriented assessment environment perceptions (r=-.03; *p*<.01).

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

In the first research problem of the study, whether the 7h and 8th grade elementary students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment differed in terms of the gender or not was investigated. According to the findings, it was observed that the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment differed significantly in terms of the gender and the difference was in favor of boys in their perceptions about the performance-oriented assessment environment. Accordingly, boys perceived the classroom assessment environment as performance-oriented compared to girls. In the researches investigating the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment or assessment tasks, different results stands out. In some researches, it was determined that the gender didn't cause a significant difference or caused weak differences in perceptions mentioned (Alkharusi, 2013; Elkhader, 2008; Herman, Klein, & Wakai, 1997; Koul, 2012) while in other researches, there were differences in terms of the gender (Alkharusi, 2011; Alkharusi et al., 2013; Birenbaum & Feldman, 1998; Cakan, 2011; Dhindsa et al., 2007; Gao, 2012; Kniveton, 1996).

Similar to this research, in other two studies investigating directly the relationship between the perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and gender (Alkharusi, 2011; Alkharusi et al., 2013), it was determined that the gender caused a difference in the perceptions about both the learning-oriented assessment environment and performance-oriented assessment environment. According to the results of the both studies, while compared to boys, girls significantly perceived the classroom assessment environment as learning-oriented, boys significantly perceived it as performance-oriented compared to girls. The results of this study show partial parallelism with the results of the studies of Alkharusi (2011) and Alkharusi et al. (2013). As a result of this study, it was determined that the boys perceived the classroom assessment environment as performance-oriented compared to girls. However, while in this study, there was no significant difference in the perceptions about the learning-oriented assessment environment, Alkharusi et al. (2013) determined a significant difference in favor of girls. One of the possible reasons behind this difference may be the countries and accordingly the cultural structures are different because the male and female students are taught in the same classroom in Turkish education system but there is no coeducation in the country where Alkharusi' study took place. Male and female students are taught in different classes and this difference may be the reason behind the difference in research results. On the other hand, the male students in the present study perceived the classroom assessment environment as performance-oriented when compared to the female students, and this result can be associated with the gender stereotypes and the social roles given to the males and females in Turkish culture. However, it is suggested to design different studies including qualitative data collection tools such as interviews and observations in order to develop a deeper understanding.

As for the second research problem, whether the students' achievement-goal orientations differed in terms of gender or not was investigated. The findings obtained demonstrated that the students' achievement-goal orientations didn't differ significantly in terms of gender. Gender is a frequently used independent variable in studies related to the achievement goal orientations. However, there isn't clear results in the studies related to the relationship between the gender and the students' achievement-goal orientations (Giota, 2002) because in some studies, parallel with the results of this study, it is emphasized that the gender doesn't cause a difference in students' achievement-goal orientations (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Smith &Sinclair, 2005), and in other studies, it is emphasized that girls adopt learning-orientations more compared to boys (Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Gherasima et al., 2013; Hanrahan & Cerin, 2009; Pajares et al., 2000; Steinmayr et al., 2011) and boys have performance-oriented goals (Freudenthaler et al., 2008; Middleton & Midgley 1997). One of the possible reasons behind this situation is that the students' achievement-goal orientations were investigated in four categories because even in the same research results, while differences in some types of achievement-goal orientations were determined in terms of gender, in some of them, there was no difference in terms of gender (e.g.; Musa, 2013; Pekrun, Elliot & Maier 2006). On the other hand, contradictions in the literature show that along with the gender, other factors may have an effect on students' achievement-goal orientations. Therefore, investigating the achievement-goal orientations in terms of only gender can be considered a limitation of this study. In order to overcome this limitation, the future studies should include other variables in the research model as well.

As for the third research problem, whether there was a relationship between the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations was investigated. The findings showed that there was a positive relationship between the perceptions about the learning-oriented assessment environment and approach (learning and performance) goals but there was a negative relationship between the perceptions about the learning-oriented assessment environment and avoidance (learning and performance). On the contrary, it was determined that there was a negative relationship between the perceptions about the performance-oriented assessment environment and approach (learning and performance) goals and there was a positive relationship between the perceptions about the performance-oriented assessment environment and avoidance (learning and performance) goals. This finding was expected because learning-oriented classroom assessment environment and performance-oriented classroom assessment environment have opposite characteristics (Alkharusi, 2011). As a result of this study, the weak negative relationship between the learning-oriented assessment environment and performance-oriented assessment environment proves the point mentioned. Investigating this relationship, Alkharusi (2009) determined that there was a negative relationship between the perceptions about the learning-oriented assessment environment and the perceptions about the performance-oriented assessment environment in his study.

The strong relationship between the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment has been emphasized by both achievement-goal orientation theorists (Ames, 1992) and classroom assessment environment theorists (Brookhart, 1997). There are many studies investigating the relationship between the students' achievement-goal orientations and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environments (Alkharusi, 2007; Alkharusi, 2009; Church et al., 2001; Wang, 2004). Inconsistent results are obtained from these studies. Church et al. (2001) grouped the students' opinions about the classroom environment under three titles (learning-oriented, assessment-oriented, and harsh-oriented). Similarly, they categorized the achievement-goals into three groups (learning, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance). In parallel with these findings, they determined that the learning goals had a positive relationship with the learning-oriented classroom environment in their study. Once again similarly, they determined that the performance-avoidance goals had a positive relationship with both assessment-oriented and harsh-oriented classroom environment. Different from this study, Church et al. (2001) determined that there is a positive relationship between the performance-approach goals and assessment-oriented classroom environment. In addition to this, investigating the relationship between the classroom assessment environment and achievement-goal orientations, Wang (2004)

categorized the classroom assessment environment into three groups but alternatively, he named the types of the assessment environment as learning-oriented, test-oriented and praise-oriented. The results of the Wang (2004)'s study demonstrate many similarities with our study. As a result of his study, Wang (2004) determined that there was a positive relationship between the perceptions about the learning-oriented classroom assessment environment and learning-oriented goals but the perceptions about the test-oriented classroom assessment environment had a positive relationship with the performance-avoidance oriented goals and it had a negative relationship with the performance-approach oriented goals. In another research investigating the relationship between the achievement-goal orientations and the perceptions about the classroom assessment environment, Alkharusi (2009) categorized the classroom assessment environment into two categories as learning-oriented and performance-oriented and he determined a positive relationship between the perceptions about the learning-oriented classroom environment and students' learning goals. Different from our study, he determined that there was no relationship between the perceptions about the performance-oriented assessment environment and their learning goals.

As can be realized from the studies (Alkharusi, 2009; Church et al., 2001; Wang, 2004) and the theoretical explanations (Ames, 1992; Brookhart, 1997), there is a strong relationship between the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations.

In conclusion, in this study, the following aspects were determined; there was a strong relationship between the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their achievement-goal orientations; the gender variable didn't cause a significant difference in students' achievement-goal orientations but it caused a significant difference in their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment.

The results were limited by the data obtained from 369 students in three different state schools. This sample isn't expected to represent the whole 7th and 8th graders in Turkey but it can be assumed that the students in the sample demonstrate similar properties and academic characteristics with other students in other elementary schools since the same curriculum is used in all of the elementary school of Ministry of National Education and they undergo similar processes. Therefore, the results of this study can be said to represent the elementary students who have a similar socio-economic levels. Still, in order to overcome this limitation for this study, a broader sample which can represent the whole population is suggested to be involved in the future studies. On the other hand, the future studies may involve the student groups which display differences in terms of academic achievement and socio-economic level, and whether these variables have an effect on their classroom assessment environment perceptions and the achievement-goal orientations adopted can be investigated. It is considered that the mentioned limitation can be overcome only by this way.

On the other hand, the students' perceptions about the classroom assessment environment may not be reflecting the classroom assessment practices completely. Therefore, in a future research, deeper information can be gathered through the qualitative data collection tools such as observations and interviews. The research results are limited only by achievement-goal orientations in terms of investigating the relationship between their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment and their motivational characteristics. Therefore, the relationship between the students' different motivational characteristics (self-efficacy, learning approaches, etc.) and their perceptions about the classroom assessment environment can be revealed in future studies. It is thought that the classroom assessment environment theory will provide a new perspective in the studies conducted in classrooms whether in primary schools or in universities since it is a relatively novel concept in national literature. At the same time, this theory can bring a new approach into the literature in the explanation of the relationship between the students' opinions about the assessment practices and their motivations.

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