

Factors That Play a Role in the Academic Resilience of Academics¹

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ABSTRACT

In academic life, it is possible for all students to experience different obstacles, hardships and setbacks. While some students fail to negotiate their way through these difficulties, many are successful. In this context, the purpose of this study is to reveal the factors that play a role in the academic resilience of academics. In this context, a qualitative study was employed, with semi-structured interviews conducted with 11 academics from the Educational Sciences Faculty of Ankara University, Turkey. Eligibility criteria required academics to have had a risk factor in their life. The academics were also selected on the basis of their title and years of experience to sustain variety. In order to conduct interviews, an interview guide was prepared by the researchers. The questions in the interview guide for this study were linked to risk factors, and internal and external protective factors. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze collected data. According to the findings, mainly risk factors which academically resilient academics had experienced were poverty, and negative environmental conditions. On the other hand, this study revealed that internal factors such as self-esteem, decisiveness, curiosity and external factors such as family support, qualified teachers, and peer relations helped them to overcome their risk factors.

Key Words: Academic resilience, Risk factors, Protective factors, Academics

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INTRODUCTION

It is inevitable for each individual to come across different hardships and obstacles in their academic life. It is a known fact that while some individuals get through negative situations, some cannot cope. Individuals who cope with the obstacles despite the hard conditions they face, are named as academically resilient individuals in the literature (Morales & Trotman, 2011). These individuals are seen to be able to reach positive results despite negative conditions. Academic resilience is an individual's struggle despite situations in which the individual can be unsuccessful or face negative life conditions, and achieving academic success throughout the education process (Alva, 1991).

Aside from being one of the most important research fields of educational sciences, academic achievement is one of the topics that measurement and evaluation science field has recently started to deal with. Academic resilience is a special and interesting topic for researchers who examine the ways of academic achievement for students and closely observe and analyze students' cognitive and affective processes. This because in today's time, the definition of success has largely widened and changed. In this sense, success is explained depending on students' managing their cognitive capacities efficiently, self-regulation and self-sufficiency skills (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007).

Reasons or risk factors of the hardships faced by individuals in academic life vary. Living with parents, being exposed to a natural disaster, living in financial difficulty, having a chronic disease etc. are among the examples of risk factors (Masten, 1994; Ricardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990). While these factors and similar risk factors create negative results in an individual's academic life, they can also damage their progress in many fields. Together, these risk factors may impact an individual's progress by triggering each other. Moreover, these results may have a different impact on each individual (Little, Axford, & Morpeth, 2004).

There are factors influential in academically resilient individuals' achievement despite the risk factors; these factors are referred to as *protective factors*. For this reason, it is important to analyze protective factors. Identifying and naming protective factors will serve as a guide to individuals who find themselves in risky a situation within their academic life. Protective factors help the emergence and development of positive results for individuals (Masten & Tellegen, 2012); and are divided into *internal protective factors* and *external protective factors*. Internal protective factors are related to an individual's own personality characteristics (Foster, 2013), whilst external protective factors relate to an individual's social sphere (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009).

Findings of the studies which analyze protective factors that are influential in academically resilient individuals' achievements are beneficial, both for individuals who cannot show academic resilience and for academically resilient individuals as examples of the ways in which they can achieve success. Moreover, they also offer guiding hints for decision makers who establish national education policies, and reveal important information for the related science field.

In the national field literature, protective factors which have positive effects on academic resilience are determined as; a family's high expectations of the individual, attention and kindness shown within an individual's school and friendship relations, an individual's positive thoughts on his/her academic resilience, high expectations regarding

academicians, having emphatic understanding, internal locus of control and being positive about the future (Gizir, 2004); perceived psychological autonomy, family's high expectations, social support perceived from friends, attention and high expectations in environmental relations, participating in in-school activities, educational expectations, cooperation and communication factors (Er, 2009); type of program students are studying, school features, the number of teachers per student, parents' financial contribution to schooling, disciplinary atmosphere at school, positive relations between teacher and student, gender, geographical region of residence, and type of educational program maintained (Dincer & Oral, 2010); gender, class level, grade point average of school achievement, attendance, father's educational status, family's monthly income, support received from family and friends (Arastaman, 2011); student-teacher relations, sense of belonging, attitude towards learning at school, attitude towards school and perceived supervision (Kalender, 2015); cognitive flexibility, perceived social support, and gender (Yavuz & Kutlu, 2016).

Together with this, protective factors determined at the international level are; positive view on intellectual skill and having a strong sense of responsibility (Alva, 1991); attachment to school (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997); internal focus of control, high self-concept, supportive families and their high academic expectations (Arnold, 2003); social-emotional competence and perceived social support (Elias & Haynes, 2008); planning ability, cognitive flexibility (Acedevo & Esquivel, 2008); supportive parents and friends, participating in school activities, valuing school, growing up with parents (Perez et al., 2009); school's academic optimism (Fallon, 2010); communication within family, relation between parent and individual, social behaviors (Jowkar, Kohoulat, & Zakeri, 2011); self-confidence, having motivation (OECD, 2011), social support perceived from family and society, making more efforts to study, wish to advance in academic life (Wu, Tsang, & Ming, 2012); support received from family, peers and teachers and high expectations of the family (Foster, 2013); success-oriented orientation (Jowkar, Kojuri, Kohoulat, & Hayat, 2014).

Descriptive studies on academic resilience (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Malindi & Machenjedze, 2012; Morales, 2008; Williams, 2011) in the international field literature also provided valuable contributions related to this topic. Dass-Brailsford (2005) conducted a study with poor students who showed academic resilience in South Africa, and determined that having high motivation, being entrepreneurial and purpose-oriented play a positive role on academic resilience. In another study, it was determined that dominant atmosphere in a family, relations between teachers, role models in the environment, and the existence of supportive social institutions are protective factors, and that female students are more resilient than their male counterparts in terms of academic resilience (Morales, 2008). In a study conducted on African-American students who live with one parent and who have a family with a low income, non-traditional supportive education, special education given to families, making close contact, school features that will increase resiliency, families' link with school, resiliency of the environment, used strategies, social supportive webs develop academic resilience (Williams, 2011). According to the study conducted on students who are provided with shelter and sent to school by social communities in South Africa, having a free atmosphere at school, learned new information, and attachment to school contribute to resiliency (Malindi & Machenjedze, 2012). Aside from the studies stated here, there are almost no descriptive studies conducted on this subject at the national level.

Considering that success (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2013) is shaped according to the environment in which individual lives, academic resilience can also be thought to work like this. For this reason, a descriptive study conducted on national characteristics will provide a significant contribution to the national field literature. Moreover, examining the topic through more detailed qualitative processes is more appropriate in terms of the contribution it will bring to the study.

One of the important purposes of the investment, research, projects and developed education programs in Turkish education is to increase student achievement. In this sense, when educational regulations and developments regarding this topic that education shareholders put forward are examined, it can be stated that very often they do not focus on the topic of 'understanding student'. Changes which are realized without examining student profiles in their academic lives, making them the focus point, analyzing their ways of accomplishing achievement and putting forward the problems affecting students, or made in the absence of serious studies, can prove inadequate in solving the problems. For this reason, in order to understand academic achievement of the student, studies regarding student's own internal dynamics should first of all be conducted. In this frame, measuring and evaluating psychological characteristics that affect academic achievement, and being included in the agenda of the education system and educational sciences will be of importance.

It will be of value to conduct studies about academic resilience that would light the ways of achieving academic success of students who are in risky situation (OECD, 2014), and who live in Turkey. In this sense, findings gathered from the studies conducted with individuals who showed academic resilience and thus have many achievements in their academic lives would both attract and be an important source for those who will undertake research on this topic. Studies which are carried out with academicians who showed academic resilience despite the risks faced in their lives and have a say in academic life will carry a great value in this sense. With these kind of studies, guiding life lessons can be taken from academicians who show academic resilience. Academic achievement of academicians contain affective features such as high motivation outside the field knowledge, positive attitude towards studying, having interest in scientific and educational fields and wondering. Thus, the determining of factors which cause risks and protective factors supporting academic characteristics of the person who became an academician carries a surveyable feature. Finding out these factors and conducting this kind of study with academicians who show academic resilience will also fill an important gap in the field literature. This study aims to put forward how academicians achieved positive results and became successful despite the risk factors. Answers to these questions are sought within the scope of the study: for the academically resilient academicians; 1) what are the risk factors they face? 2); what are their internal protective factors? 3) what are their external protective factors?

METHOD

Research Design

This study has been approached descriptively. Since the topic of the study has limited information in national field literature, and as the aim is to reach more detailed information, an interview approach based on gathering qualitative data was selected. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were carried on with academicians who work in Ankara University's Faculty of Educational Sciences.

Participants

Participants of the study consist of 11 academicians who demonstrate academic resilience. The reason why academicians are chosen for the study is because academicians who show academic resilience have a say in academic life despite the risks in their lives. In this sense, findings to be obtained carry a level of importance for academic resilience field literature. When selecting academicians for interview, the condition of having a risk factor in their lives was considered. For this purpose, snowball sampling technique (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) has been applied. Furthermore, during the selection of the academicians, variation by title and seniority was sought. Within these conditions, interviews were carried out with 11 academicians (three female, eight male) who volunteered for this study and who work at Ankara University's Faculty of Educational Sciences. Some characteristics of the academicians are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participant academicians' characteristics*

| | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>Number</i> |
|-----------|------------------------|---------------|
| Age | 60 and older | 1 |
| | Between 50-59 | 5 |
| | Between 40-49 | 3 |
| | Between 30-39 | 2 |
| Title | Professor | 4 |
| | Associate Professor | 3 |
| | Assistant Professor | 4 |
| Seniority | 34 and more | 1 |
| | 25-33 years | 6 |
| | 15-24 years | 2 |
| | 5-14 years | 2 |

According to Table 1, the academicians who volunteered to take part in the study are generally aged between 50 and 59. According to this, it can be said that these academicians mostly studied between 1960 and 1980.

Data Collection Tool

The Interview form used during the interviews was prepared by the researchers. According to Patton (2002), it is indicated that interview forms makes the interview process carried out with different people more comprehensive and systematic. In this context, an interview form was developed in order to determine the factors related to academic resilience. In other words, the hypothesis and works in related field are benefited while preparing questions for the interview form. Questions that were related to academic resilience and suited to the context were developed. Along with this, experts' opinions were

taken for the understandability, language and expression of the questions in the interview form, with any necessary corrections applied. The Interview form was composed of questions regarding the risk factors that existed in participants' lives, and their internal and external protective factors.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Interviews, which were conducted one-to-one with each academician, lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. In order not to experience data loss and to increase the reliability of the study, interviews were recorded with the participants' permission. During the interview, 10 of the 11 academicians gave permission to record the interview. Detailed notes were taken during the academicians' interviews. After the interviews were transcribed, participant review and permission to publish, with some academicians adding data or suggesting corrections.

Data obtained from the interviews were separated based on the descriptive analysis technique. Analysis of the data started with reading the transcribed interviews and notes taken during the interviews in detail, and making supplementary notes. Interview transcripts for each academicians were compared and notes organized with regards to similarities and differences. Afterwards, considering the theoretical frame, coding was conducted based on the notes related to each question directed during the interviews. Codings were interpreted and after that, interview transcripts and notes taken during the interviews were finalized and participant approval sought. At the end of this process, themes for the questions asked were determined. In addition, quotations of academicians regarding the related themes were examined and selections made. When choosing the quotations, those being the best to summarize/explain the theme were taken into consideration. Themes reached while structuring findings of this study are linked with the coding of the study. Reporting of the findings of the study is based on themes.

In analyzing the data, controls and examinations regarding objectivity were made. Opinions were sought from an expert in the fields of measurement and evaluation, and psychological counselling. Guidance was taken and these experts also approved the application of the coding.

More than one strategy was used in order to provide reliability and validity for the study. The creation of the interview form, which is a data collection tool that initially serves for the purpose, was based on discussions around the field literature. After that, there was detailed reporting of the procedure related to the study. Analysis of the data was based on field literature, regular consultation of and cross checks with the notes taken during the interviews. Opinions were taken from experts regarding the coding and created themes.

FINDINGS

In this section, findings regarding sub-goals of the study are provided.

Risk Factors Academicians with Academic Resilience Face

Findings regarding the question "What were the hardships which threatened and distressed you in your life?" which was directed to academicians for this sub-goal, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Risk factors faced by academicians with academic resilience

| Risk Factors | Codes | Number |
|--|--|--------|
| Poverty | Low income | 6 |
| | Number of people at home | 4 |
| | Smallness of the house | 2 |
| | Doing an extra job | 2 |
| Hardships resulting from close environment | Transportation service problems | 4 |
| | Shantytown | 4 |
| | Low level of education | 4 |
| | Peers' inhibition | 3 |
| | Neighborhood pressure (labelling) | 2 |
| | Water, heating, or electricity problems | 2 |
| | Gossip | 1 |
| Unrest in family | Father-mother arguments | 3 |
| | Being firstborn child (more responsibility) | 2 |
| | Indifference | 2 |
| | Father-mother authority | 1 |
| | Violence (to oneself) | 1 |
| Hardships faced in school environment | Political events (education interrupted, ideological pressures, conflicts, fights) | 3 |
| | Bad management | 2 |
| | Educational resources (access to books, technical inadequacies) | 1 |
| Illness | Taking a break from education | 2 |
| Death | Loss of a relative | 1 |
| Migration | Unity of the family | 1 |

According to Table 2, the risk factors that resilient academicians face the most are poverty and hardship resulting from a close environment; while the risk factors they face least are death and migration. Accordingly, it can be said that the risks academicians face in their lives mostly originate from financial difficulties. As seen in Table 2, academicians are exposed to at least one or several stated risk factors in their childhood/adolescence/youth.

Internal Protective Factors of Academically Resilient Academicians

Findings regarding the questions “What characteristics do you contribute to your success significantly?” and “In what ways do these characteristics contribute to your academic future?” directed at academicians are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Internal protective factors of academically resilient academicians

| Internal Protective Factors | Number |
|---|--------|
| Willingness to learning something new (reading many books, magazines or newspapers) | 10 |
| Self-confidence (I absolutely do it, I will succeed) | 10 |
| Being decisive, determined | 8 |
| Being hardworking | 7 |
| Being curious (about new things, situations or information) | 7 |
| Being disciplined | 5 |
| Sense of responsibility | 5 |
| Intrinsic motivation | 4 |
| Considering education, studying as salvation | 4 |
| Being observant | 4 |
| Being organized (time management) | 4 |
| Easy to learn (good listener) | 3 |
| Making contact easily | 3 |
| Being content with possessions (benefiting) | 2 |

| <i>Internal Protective Factors</i> | <i>Number</i> |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Creativity | 2 |
| Having habits | 2 |
| Being patient | 2 |
| Humor | 1 |

According to Table 3, internal factors which played the most significant role in academicians' academic resilience are "willingness to new learnings", "self-confidence" and "being decisive, determined".

External Protective Factors of Academically Resilient Academicians

The third group of questions directed to academicians are as follows: (i) "What factors from family and relatives significantly contributed to your academic achievement?", (ii) "What factors in your school life significantly contributed to your academic achievement?", (iii) "What were the factors in which friends/peers significantly contributed to your academic achievement?", (iv) "In what ways did these factors contribute to your academic future?" Findings regarding these questions are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. External protective factors of academically resilient academicians

| <i>External Protective Factors</i> | <i>Codes</i> | <i>Number</i> |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Family | Love, support, attention | 10 |
| | Guiding towards having university education | 10 |
| | Self-sacrifice | 6 |
| | Being proud | 5 |
| | Offering opportunity | 4 |
| | High expectations | 3 |
| | Making child not feel hardships | 3 |
| School | Teacher qualification (being experienced, having a vision) | 10 |
| | Teacher support | 10 |
| | School culture | 6 |
| | Administration (sensitive, disciplined, experienced) | 4 |
| Peer | Time spent together | 7 |
| | Influencing | 7 |
| | Solidarity | 5 |
| | Sharing | 5 |

According to Table 4, among external protective factors that academicians appeal to, "Family" in 'love, support and attention' and 'Guiding towards having university education' subjects; "School" in 'teacher qualification' and 'teacher support' subject; and "Peers" in 'time spent together' and 'influencing' subjects contribute the most as external protective factors.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

When risk factors of academicians who show academic resilience are examined, it is seen that *poverty* is the risk factor that is faced the most. An academician who had this risk factor stated this:

"We never lived a financially bright life. We always tried to cut our coat according to our means, but our means were always short of means. We grew up but we always tried to stitch the coat to enhance our means."

As it can be understood from the related statements, poverty's effect on an individual's life covers a specific process, therefore it shows more continuity than of other risk factors. At the same time, poverty is seen to be a critical risk factor (Winfield, 1994). The reason is that by triggering other risk factors, poverty provides basis for other risk factors such as poor maintenance and malnourishment, and low educational level (Brackenreed, 2010).

According to the findings obtained from the study, it can be said that generally, there are poor families around which there is an environment of other poor families. From this point of view, poverty can also provide basis for risk factors that result from the environment being lived in. This situation supports another risk factor which academicians face the most, which is hardships resulted from a close environment, which is one of the findings of this current study. In this context, an academician states how the close environment affected him/her with these words:

"The neighborhood we were in was a place for poor people. The educational level of the people around in the environment was very low. It was a conservative environment, plus there were many violence incidents. This affected us even though we were kids."

Different than the findings seen in the field literature, related to the special conditions facing Turkey, political events are considered as a risk factor in this current study. Political events that took place between 1974 and 1981 in Turkey profoundly affected academicians who lived their childhood, adolescence and youth during these years. One academician who experienced hardship because of political events expressed his/her opinion as:

"...In the spring months of my senior year of high school, I bought a test book a couple of months before the university admission exam to have a better idea about the exam. I was thinking since there were no class at school, I would at least read this book in the dormitory in the evening. When I walked into the dormitory the evening after I bought the book, I saw my book was torn and scattered all around."

An academician who was exposed to more than one stated risk factors states:

"I had a bad childhood. Some people say 'Oh how I wish to be a child!' You will never hear me say that; it was very bad... because childhood is a period in which you are not in charge of your will, but it rests entirely with nonsensical people."

As it can be understood from the related expressions, individuals' poverty and conditions affect individuals and play a role in their academic lives. Generally, there are studies in the field literature on academic resilience conducted on individuals who were chosen according to these stated risk factors (Alva, 1991; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Malindi & Machenjedze, 2012; Perez et al., 2009; Weaver, 2009; Williams, 2011; Wu et al., 2012).

One of the most important results reached regarding internal protective factors of the academicians who showed academic resilience is how an individual can succeed with risk factors in their lives. These are within environments in which they would adopt fundamental life skills such as self-confidence, being decisive and determined, being hardworking, being curious, and having sense of responsibility. Internal factors which are generally encountered in the field literature are; self-confidence, self-respect, ambition, flexibility, determination,

curiosity, problem solving, social competence, high expectation for future, sense of responsibility, communication skill, internal locus of control, self-help, and faith in being able to succeed etc. (Bernard, 2004; Werner, 1995). Findings of this research carried out with academicians shows a parallelism with the findings of the field literature.

In this current study, one internal factor, “considering education, studying as salvation” produced different results than the field literature, drawing attention to developing academic resilience of the academicians. Views of three academicians who best explain this theme stated:

“You have a salvation necessity. Now, for people who come from environments like us, salvation lies with a couple of things, one of them is studying.”

“Our biggest capital is our mind. No income, no resource, we say the only way is studying.”

“I was so determined about studying, I did not have a choice of not studying. I do not even remember having an option except for going to university.”

As seen from these statements, academicians who show academic resiliency approached education as a way of exiting the risky life they were in and shaped their academic lives according to this. It is determined by this study that academicians are determined about escaping their risky lives. In this sense, another internal factor which plays a role in academicians’ academic resilience, “being decisive and determined”, can be emphasized through the following view of an academician:

“If I set my mind on something, I do it. There is no ‘impossible’ in my literature. I do my best. I hate the word ‘no’.”

Along with this, one academician who showed academic resilience talked of life throughout elementary and middle school as:

“If I used to be an afternoon student at school, I used get up at 6:00 and study until 8:00. I used to start working at 8:30. Then I would go to school. After school, I would go back to work... I would come home at 21:30 and do my homework in living room since the only stove was in the living room. I would go to sleep at 22:30.”

Within the scope of the related quotes, individual’s being decisive in achieving academic success and spending days with the same discipline and determination without giving up is seen as a great example for academic resilience behavior.

When external protective factors of academicians who have shown academic resilience are examined, it is seen that an individual can carry him/herself toward academic achievement if individuals feel loved, are paid attention to in the family, the importance given to school education is increased, and teacher support and equipment are enhanced in schools. In field literature, among the external protective factors, “family and relatives” taking care of the individual, giving encouraging speeches, guiding individuals reasonably, giving individual opportunities to develop self-confidence and self-respect have been significant in developing individual’s academic resilience behavior. Together with this, having educated environment, guidance towards quality schools, educational services, support units and preventive programs, resources and opportunities presented by the environment and society, teacher attention, supplementary support services, teaching in

small classes, individual's having environments in which he/she can feel safe can also be seen as among the effective elements (Bernand, 2004; Winfield, 1994;). According to related findings, this current study, conducted with academicians, shows parallelism with the field literature.

It is an expected situation for love, support and attention that families show their children to play a role as a protective factor on the academic resilience of academicians. The finding that is remarkable and different than the field literature is the role of guiding towards reading as being influential to a high level. On this, two different academicians stated:

“My parents always advised the importance of studying, even though they are uneducated.”

Yet another academician stated:

“Both my mother and my father attach great importance to education. My mother did not study as they could not afford it; and this is why my mother has been really influential in my studying. My father used to say ‘I would carry stone but you will be schooled’. Therefore, my parents had opinions regarding the schooling of girls in our family.”

This situation can be evaluated as an attitude that is developed especially by poor families in Turkey. These families believe it is possible for their children to have a better future than theirs, but only with the good education they receive. Considering the study mostly consists of academicians who have poverty risk factors, these comments are explanatory.

Considering the mark left on academicians who show academic resilience, it can be expressed that schools and teachers carry the greatest importance after the family on individuals' academic lives. For this reason, teacher equipment at schools, good quality management, and rich and contemporary school culture are seen as influential in diminishing the negative effects of risk factors faced by students. Findings of the international student achievement assessment exams such as PIRLS, TIMSS & PISA are in accordance with the findings of this study (Martin, Mullis, Foy & Stanco, 2012; Mullis, Martin, Foy & Arora, 2012; Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker, 2012; OECD, 2013).

One academician explained the role school plays on academic resilience as an important external protective factor:

“School was always a way of salvation for me. The more I stayed at school, the prouder I became. The more I stayed at school, the more I was respected. As a result, I was top of my class and school.”

School's providing different environments to individuals with risk-laden lives and for them to be affected less, can be inferred from the statements seen so far. For this reason, school is the most important institution that can help academically resilient individuals to build a better future (Bernand, 2004).

As can be seen in the field literature (Alva, 1991; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Dincer & Oral, 2010; Foster, 2013; Gizir, 2004; Kalender, 2015), teacher support acts as an external protective factor on academically resilient students. Existence of a special teacher in the academic lives

of students who show academic resilience is also seen in the field literature (Morales, 2008). This is observed in some of the academicians interviewed:

“My teacher in elementary school was a very special person, she was so nice. Even though I have forgotten everybody’s name, I remember hers. She was a teacher who loved students; did not discriminate between students. She was a real teacher.”

“... having a wonderful teacher in 5th grade changed everything. He/she would always guide me, not just me, but many of my friends who were like me. He/she would sense skills and guide well. He/she was an interesting teacher.”

Teacher quality can also be expressed as playing a role in showing academic resilience. Views of one academician regarding this stated:

“I was with good teachers. They looked after and became really good role models. The foundation I got from family was supported in high school. Teachers would come by being selected. For this reason, there were many quality teachers. They would pay attention to us.”

According to the results of this current study, one external protective factor that academically resilient academicians appeal to is the support they get from peers. This factor too is determined as an important protective factor in the field literature (Arastaman, 2011; Er, 2009; Foster, 2013; Gizir, 2004; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Martin & Marsh, 2006; Perez et al., 2009). Regarding this, one academician stated:

“I had friends from the neighborhood until the period before high school. I still see them. I think those friendships were a strong protective factor. They were all people who wanted to do things.”

Another academician also emphasized this protective factor as:

“People who came across with us can sometimes change our lives a little. Orhan Pamuk says ‘One day I read a book and my whole life changed’, maybe mine is like that too. I took a lesson and my life changed.”

Within the frame of the related quotes, it can be emphasized that the time academicians spent together with their peers, being motivated and being role models for each other are influential in their achievements. In this context, it can be said that peers have a strong influence over one another.

Within the frame of the obtained findings of this current study, the following suggestions can be made to researchers who will carry out further studies, and to education shareholders who may use the findings:

For researchers: (i) In order to reveal findings that would support students who are studying in primary, middle and high schools, a similar study could be conducted with academically resilient students. (ii) Studies can be conducted with individuals who are awarded scholarships at private education institutions and moved forward in their academic lives. (iii) Models can be developed on protective factors that are generated upon analysis of the findings of other qualitative studies conducted in the field literature, and the tests can be applied on quantitative works. (iv) In order to increase the variety of risk factors that could not be reached in this current study, research can be carried out with academicians who

completed their academic lives in different time periods, raised in different regions, and come from different education levels etc.

For education shareholders: (i) Based on findings gathered in this current study, informative seminars can be given to families who have risk factors in order to increase the level of academic resilience of their children. (ii) Contact meetings that would enable families that have risk factors to have a positive attitude towards education and schooling could be developed. (iii) Educational activities (conferences, seminars etc.) could be organized that would help family members, teachers and school administrators increase their sensibility/awareness to providing students with environments in which they can develop their basic skills. (iv) Studies can be conducted with teachers that would increase their quality and develop relations which are suitable for students who show academic resilience. (v) School administrations and families can be informed about providing environments in which students who have risk factors can spend time with their peers, which can lead to positive results.

When the findings of the current study and suggestions based on these findings are taken under consideration, conducting further research on the topic of academic resilience will provide more information about increasing the academic achievements of disadvantaged individuals in Turkish society. It will also serve to highlight risk factors to be paid attention to for individuals, as well as the directing of education policies.

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Akademisyenlerin Akademik Yılmazlıklarında Rol Oynayan Faktörler⁴

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Giriş

Akademik yaşamda, her bireyin farklı güçlüklerle ve engellerle karşılaşması kaçınılmazdır. Bazı bireyler olumsuz durumların üstesinden gelirken, bazılarının olumsuz durumlarla baş edemedikleri bilinen bir gerçektir. İçinde bulunduğu güç koşullara rağmen karşılaştığı engellerle baş eden bireyler alan yazında “akademik yılmaz” bireyler olarak adlandırılmaktadır (Morales & Trotman, 2011). Bu bireylerin, olumsuz koşullara rağmen olumlu sonuçlara ulaştıkları görülmektedir. Akademik yılmazlık, bireyin başarısız olabileceği durumlara ya da olumsuz yaşam koşullarına rağmen mücadele ederek, eğitim sürecinde yüksek akademik başarı elde etmesidir (Alva, 1991).

Akademik başarı, eğitim bilimlerinin son derece önem taşıyan araştırma alanından birisi olmakla birlikte, özellikle son yıllarda ölçme ve değerlendirme bilim alanının üzerinde durduğu konulardan biridir. Öğrencilerin akademik başarıyı elde edilme yollarını araştıran, öğrencilerin, bilişsel ve duyuşsal süreçlerini yakından izleyen, inceleyen araştırmacılar için akademik yılmazlık özel ve ilginç bir konudur. Çünkü günümüzde başarı tanımı genişlemekte ve değişmektedir. Bu anlamda örneğin, başarı öğrencilerin zihinsel kapasitelerini etkili yönetebilmelerine ve kendilerinin öz-düzenleme ve öz-yeterlilik becerilerine bağlı olarak açıklanmaktadır (Schunk & Zimmermann, 2007). Akademik yılmaz öğrenciler de tam bu noktada nasıl “başarılı” olunabileceğinin yollarını sunabilecek yeterliktedirler, hem de bu sunumu yaşamlarında bulunan risk faktörlerine rağmen yapabilmektedirler.

Akademik yaşamda yer alan birçok bireyin, karşılaştıkları güçlüklerin nedenleri ya da risk faktörleri çeşitli olabilir. Anne ya da babayla yaşama, doğal afete maruz kalma, ekonomik sıkıntı içinde yaşama, kronik hastalığa sahip olma vb. durumlar risk faktörlerine birer örnektir (Ricardson, Neiger, Jensen & Kumpfer, 1990; Masten, 1994). Bunlar ve bunlar gibi risk faktörleri bireyin akademik yaşamında olumsuz sonuçlar ortaya çıkarırken, bireyin birçok alanda ilerlemesine de zarar verecek durumdadır. Bununla birlikte, bazı risk faktörleri birbirlerini tetikleyerek bireyin gelişmesini engelleyen sonuçları doğurabilmekte ve bu sonuçlar her bir birey için farklı etkiye sahip olabilmektedir (Little, Axford & Morpeth, 2004).

Akademik yılmazlık gösteren bireylerin risk faktörlerine rağmen başarılı olmalarında etkili olan koruyucu faktörlerin incelenmesi önem taşımaktadır. Çünkü bu koruyucu faktörlerin isimlendirilmesi ve ortaya çıkarılması akademik yaşamında riskli durumda olan her bir birey için yol gösterici olacaktır. Koruyucu faktörler, birey açısından olumlu sonuçların ortaya çıkmasına ve gelişmesine yardımcı olan etmenlerdir (Masten & Tellegen, 2012) ve içsel, dışsal koruyucu faktörler olarak ikiye ayrılmaktadır. İçsel koruyucu faktörler bireyin kendi kişisel özellikleriyle (Foster, 2013), dışsal koruyucu faktörler ise bireyin

⁴ Bu makale International Congress on Education for the Future: Issues and Challenges’te (13-15 Mayıs 2015, Ankara) sunulmuştur.

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toplumsal çevresinde bulunan faktörlerle ilgilidir (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado % Cortes, 2009).

Bu nedenle akademik yılmazlık gösteren bireylerin başarısında etkili olan koruyucu faktörleri inceleyen çalışmaların bulguları hem akademik yılmazlık gösteremeyen diğer bireylere yarar sağlamakta ve akademik yılmazlık gösteren bireylerin başarıyı elde etme yolları onlar için örnek oluşturmakta hem ulusal eğitim politikalarını oluşturan karar vericiler için yol gösterici ipuçları sunmakta hem de ilgili bilim alanı için önemli bilgiler ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Türk eğitimindeki yatırımların, araştırmaların, projelerin ve geliştirilen öğretim programlarının önemli amaçlarından biri öğrenci başarısını arttırmaktır. Bu bağlamda eğitim paydaşlarının bu konuyla ilgili ortaya koyduğu eğitsel düzenlemeler ve gelişmeler incelendiğinde, bunlarda “öğrenciyi anlama” konusunun çok fazla odağa alınmadığı belirtilebilir. Öğrencilerin akademik yaşamlarındaki profillerini incelemeyen, onları odak noktaya almadan, onların başarıya ulaşma yollarını irdelemeyen ve öğrenciyi etkileyen sorunları ortaya koymadan gerçekleştirilen ya da ciddi araştırmalara dayanmadan yapılan bu değişiklikler var olan sorunları çözmede yetersiz kalabilmektedir. Bu nedenle öğrencinin akademik başarısının anlaşılabilmesi için öncelikle öğrencinin kendi iç dinamikleriyle ilgili çalışmaların yürütülmesi analitik bir anlayış olacaktır. Bu çerçevede, akademik başarı üzerine etki eden psikolojik özelliklerin ölçülmesi ve değerlendirilmesi, eğitim sisteminin ve eğitim bilimlerinin gündeminde yer alması önemli olacaktır.

Türkiye’de sayıları oldukça fazla olan riskli durumdaki öğrencinin (OECD, 2014), akademik başarıyı elde etme yollarına ışık tutabilecek, akademik yılmazlıkla ilgili çalışmalar değerli olacaktır. Bu bağlamda, akademik yılmazlık göstermiş ve böylece akademik yaşamında başarılar elde etmiş bireylerle yapılan çalışmalardan elde edilen bulgular hem ilgi çekecek hem de bu konuda araştırma yapacak olanların yararlanacağı önemli bir kaynak olacaktır. Yaşamlarındaki risklere rağmen akademik yılmazlık göstermiş ve akademik yaşamda söz sahibi olmuş akademisyenler ile yürütülmüş olan çalışmalar bu anlamda yüksek değer taşıyacaktır. Bu tür çalışmalarla, akademik yılmazlık göstermiş akademisyenlerden yaşam için yönlendirici dersler çıkartılabilecektir. Akademisyenlerin akademik başarısı, alan bilgisi dışında yüksek güdü, çalışmaya karşı olumlu tutum, bilimsel ve eğitsel alanlara ilgili olma, merak duyma gibi duyuşsal özellikleri bünyesinde barındırmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, akademisyen olmuş kişinin akademik özelliklerini destekleyen koruyucu faktörler ile risk oluşturan faktörlerin belirlenmesi araştırılabilir bir özellik taşımaktadır. Sözü edilen bu faktörlerin ortaya çıkarılması ve akademik yılmazlık gösteren akademisyenlerle yapılan bu tür bir çalışma alan yazında önemli boşluk da dolduracaktır. Bu çalışma akademisyenlerin risk faktörlerine rağmen olumlu sonuçlara nasıl eriştiklerini/nasıl başarılı olduklarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında şu sorulara yanıt aranmıştır: Akademik yılmazlık gösteren akademisyenlerin; (i) Karşılaştıkları risk faktörleri nelerdir?; (ii) İçsel koruyucu faktörleri nelerdir?; (iii) Dışsal koruyucu faktörleri nelerdir?

Yöntem

Araştırma, betimsel olarak ele alınmıştır. Araştırmanın konusu, ulusal alan yazında kısıtlı bilgi barındırdığından, daha ayrıntılı bilgilere ulaşmak hedeflendiği için nitel verilerin toplanmasına dayalı görüşme yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır. Bu amaçla, Ankara Üniversitesi

Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi'nde görev yapan akademisyenler ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Görüşme yapılacak akademisyenler seçilirken yaşamlarında risk faktörüne sahip olmuş olmaları koşulu aranmıştır. Bu amaçla kartopu örnekleme tekniği (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) kullanılmıştır. Akademik yılmazlık göstermiş akademisyenlerden, yaşamında risk faktörü olmuş tanıdıkları akademisyenler sorulmuştur. Ayrıca akademisyenlerin seçimi sırasında unvan ve kıdem açısından çeşitlilik göstermesi de gözlemlenmiştir. Bu koşullar çerçevesinde, Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi'nden çalışma için gönüllü 11 akademisyen ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Çalışmaya gönüllü olan akademisyenler genellikle 50-59 yaş aralığındadır.

Görüşmeler sırasında kullanılan görüşme formu araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanmıştır. Patton (2002), üzerinde çalışılacak konuların keşfedilmek üzere önceden belirlenmesinin, farklı bireylerle gerçekleştirilen görüşme sürecini daha sistematik ve kapsamlı duruma getirdiğini belirtmektedir. Bu nedenle görüşme formu hazırlanırken ilgili alan yazın, güvenilirlik ve geçerlik için gerekli önemler dikkate alınarak hazırlanmıştır. Görüşme formu katılımcıların yaşamında yer almış risk faktörleri ile içsel ve dışsal koruyucu faktörlere yönelik sorulardan oluşturulmuştur.

Her akademisyenle ayrı ayrı ve bire-bir gerçekleştirilen görüşmeler yaklaşık olarak 30-40 dakika sürmüştür. Görüşmeler sırasında veri kaybının yaşanmaması ve araştırmacının güvenilirliğini arttırmak için katılımcılardan izin alınarak görüşmeler kaydedilmiştir. Görüşme sırasında 11 akademisyenden 10'u ses kayıt cihazıyla görüşmenin kaydedilmesine izin vermiştir. Diğer akademisyenle olan görüşmede ise ayrıntılı notlar alınmıştır. Bunlara ek olarak, görüşme sırasında notlar da alınmıştır. Görüşmelerin deşifre edilmesinden sonra, ilgili akademisyenlerden katılımcı onayı alınmış, bazı akademisyenler eklemeler ve düzeltmeler yapmışlardır.

Görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz ile ayrıştırılmıştır. Verilerin çözümlenmesi öncelikle deşifre edilen görüşme çıktılarının ve görüşme sırasında alınan notların ayrıntılı biçimde okunarak, ilgili notların alınmasıyla başlamıştır. Her bir akademisyenle olan görüşme çıktıları karşılaştırılmış ve benzerlikler, farklılıklar açısından notlar düzenlenmiştir. Sonrasında, görüşmelerde yöneltilen her bir soruya ilişkin notlar üzerinden kodlamalar, kuramsal çerçeve dikkate alınarak yapılmıştır. Kodlamalar deşifre edilmiş ve sonrasında katılımcı onayıyla son hali verilen görüşme çıktıları ve görüşme sırasında alınan notlar üzerinden kâğıt-kalem ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu süreç sonunda araştırmacının sorularına yönelik temalar belirlenmiştir. Bunun yanında, ilgili temaya yönelik akademisyenlerin alıntıları incelenmiş ve aralarında seçim yapılmıştır. Alıntı seçimi yapılırken temayı en iyi özetleyen/açıklayan alıntı olması dikkate alınmıştır. Bu çalışmanın bulguları yapılandırılırken ulaşılan temalar, araştırma kodlamalarıyla ilişkilendirilmiştir. Çalışma bulgularının raporlaştırılmasında temalar temel alınmıştır.

Verilerin çözümlenmesinde nesnelliğe yönelik kontroller ve incelemeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çerçevede bir ölçme ve değerlendirme ile bir rehberlik ve psikolojik danışmanlık alanındaki uzman kişiden görüş alınmış verilmiş olan kodlar uzmanlarca da onaylanmıştır.

Çalışmanın güvenilirliğini ve geçerliğini sağlamak için birden fazla strateji kullanılmıştır. Bunlar, öncelikli olarak amaca hizmet eden bir veri toplama aracı olan

görüşme formunun, alan yazına yönelik yapılan tartışmalara dayanarak oluşturulmasıdır. Sonrasında çalışmayla ilgili yapılan işlemlerin ayrıntılı olarak raporlaştırılması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Verilerin çözümlenmesinde alan yazın temel alınmış, çalışmanın görüşme kayıtlarına defalarca dönülmüş, görüşmelerde alınan notlarla çapraz kontroller gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yapılan kodlamalar ve oluşturulan temalar için ilgili alanlarda uzman kişilerden görüş alınmıştır.

Bulgular, Sonuç ve Öneriler

Akademik yılmazlık gösteren akademisyenlerin en fazla karşılaştıkları risk faktörü yoksulluk ve yakın çevreden kaynaklanan güçlükler; en az karşılaştıkları risk faktörü ise ölüm ve göç olmuştur. Buna göre akademisyenlerin yaşamlarında karşılaştıklarını riskler genellikle ekonomik sıkıntılardan kaynaklı olduğu söylenebilir.

Akademisyenlerin akademik yılmazlıklarında en fazla rol oynamış içsel faktörler “yeni öğrenmelere istekli olma”, “kendine güven”, “kararlı, azimli olma” olmuştur. Akademik yılmazlık gösteren akademisyenlerin başvurduğu dışsal koruyucu faktörlerden “Aile” ‘sevgi, destek ve ilgi’ ile ‘okumaya yönlendirme’ konusunda; “Okul” ‘öğretmen donanımı’ ile ‘öğretmen desteği’ konusunda; “Akranlar” ise ‘birlikte geçirilen zaman’, ‘etkilenme’ konusunda dışsal koruyucu faktörler olarak en çok katkıyı sağlamaktadır.

Akademik yılmazlık gösteren akademisyenlerde bıraktığı iz düşünüldüğünde aileden sonra okulların ve öğretmenlerin, bireylerin akademik yaşamlarında büyük rol üstlendiği ifade edilebilir. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular çerçevesinde bu tür çalışmalarını yapacak araştırmacılar ve bu araştırmanın bulgularını kullanacak eğitim paydaşları için şu öneriler yapılabilir:

Araştırmacılar için: (i) İlk, orta ve lise düzeyinde eğitim gören öğrencilere destek sağlayacak bulguları ortaya koymak adına, bu çalışmanın bir benzeri akademik yılmaz öğrencilerle yürütülebilir. (ii) Özel öğretim kurumlarında burs kazanıp akademik yaşamında ilerlemiş diğer bireylerle çalışmalar yapılabilir. (iii) Alan yazında yapılan diğer nitel çalışmaların bulguları incelenerek ortak çıkacak koruyucu faktörler üzerinde modeller geliştirilip, bu modellerin denenmesi nicel çalışmalarda denenebilir. (iv) Bu çalışmada ulaşılamayan risk faktörlerinin çeşitliliğini arttırmak için, akademik yaşamlarını farklı dönemlerde tamamlamış, farklı yörelerde yetişmiş, farklı eğitim düzeylerinden gelen vb. özelliklere sahip akademisyenlerle çalışmalar yürütülebilir.

Eğitim paydaşları için: (i) Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bulgulara dayanılarak, risk faktörü bulunan ailelere çocuklarının akademik yılmazlık düzeylerini arttırmak için bilgilendirici ilgili seminerler verilebilir. (ii) Risk faktörüne sahip ailelerin eğitime, okula karşı olumlu tutum geliştirmesini sağlayacak bilgilendirme toplantıları geliştirilebilir. (iii) Aile bireylerine, öğretmenlere ve okul yöneticilerine öğrencilere temel becerilerini geliştirecek ortamları sağlamada duyarlılık/farkındalık kazandıracak eğitsel etkinlikler (konferans, seminer vb.) düzenlenebilir. (iv) Öğretmenler ile onların donanımını arttırabileceği, yılmazlık gösteren öğrencilere uygun ilişkiler geliştirebileceği çalışmalar yürütülebilir. (v) Risk faktörüne sahip öğrencilerin, onları olumlu sonuçlara yöneltebilecek akranlarla birlikte zaman geçirebileceği ortamları sunma konusunda okul yöneticileri ve ailelere bilgilendirilebilir.

Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular ve bulgulara dayalı öneriler dikkate alındığında akademik yılmazlık konusunda daha fazla çalışmanın yapılması Türk toplumundaki

dezavantajlı bireylerin akademik başarılarının artırılması konusunda daha fazla bilgi ortaya koyacak ve eğitim politikalarının yönlendirilmesinde bireyler açısından da risk faktörlerinin dikkate alınmasını sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Akademik yılmazlık, Akademisyenler, Risk faktörü, Koruyucu faktörler

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