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Nesli Akarsu¹, Muhammed Turhan²

¹ Hatay Provincial Directorate of National Education,

 0000-0002-2688-249X

²Firat University,  0000-0003-4077-6471

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The Relationship between School Moral Atmosphere and Student Engagement in Secondary Schools*

Nesli Akarsu^{1}, Muhammed Turhan²**

¹Hatay Provincial Directorate of National Education,

²Firat University

Abstract

The main aim of the study is to examine the relationship between the secondary school students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere and their engagement with school. The School Engagement Scale and School Moral Atmosphere Scale were applied to 872 students attending the secondary schools in the 2016-2017 academic year. The study revealed that the school engagement levels showed a significant difference in favor of female students in terms of gender. Based on the multiple regression analysis, it was determined that school moral atmosphere is a significant predictor of school engagement. The results of this study suggest that school moral atmosphere is one of the key determinants of students' engagement with school, and hence it can be useful to improve school moral atmosphere to increase students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement.

Keywords: Student engagement with school, School moral atmosphere, Secondary school

Introduction

Many studies in the field of education have addressed student engagement with school, which is defined as "a psychological investment made by students in order to learn in the school." Previous studies revealed that student engagement level is associated with many academic and social variables such as academic success, motivation, self-esteem, intra-school relationships, substance addiction, and undesired behaviors etc. (Newmann, 1992; Savi, 2011; Cemalçılar, 2010; Birch and Ladd, 1997). The studies on student engagement have focused heavily on the consequences of student engagement and tried to identify the impacts on various individual and group-level variables. On the other side, there are a limited number of studies on the antecedents of student engagement levels. More research is needed, particularly to identify the relationships between student engagement and school contextual characteristics such as school culture and atmosphere, as well as intra-school relationships.

Previous research reveals that school engagement is a three-dimensional construct: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive (Fredericks et al., 2004). The emotional dimension refers to the presence of positive emotions, the absence of negative emotions, and the attractiveness of the school for the students during their participation in school activities. The behavioral dimension refers to factors such as attention, effort, and persistence related to school expectations, learning-related tasks, and participation in different school activities. The cognitive dimension, on the other hand, is related to the strategies used by the student in learning activities, a certain study style, and self-regulated learning (Skinner et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2011; Lombardi et al., 2019). Therefore, school engagement is closely related to factors related to the school context. In previous studies, the importance of school climate as a predictor of students' school engagement was emphasized. Studies found that various dimensions of school climate are related to cognitive and emotional engagement (Gauley, 2017; Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018). On the other hand, there are few studies examining how the moral atmosphere, which is an important variable in forming relationships in a school, is associated with students' school engagement. In particular, it is considered that studies examining the relationship between school moral atmosphere and different dimensions of school engagement (emotional, behavioral, and cognitive) will contribute to the literature.

The studies on school moral atmosphere are based on the concepts of "school as a community" or "schools as a sense of community." Particularly, the conception of "just community" suggested by Kohlberg affected the studies on school moral atmosphere. School moral atmosphere is related to the values, beliefs, and norm systems forming the relationships in a school and with students' degree of sharing these values and norms (Brugman et al., 2003;

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** Corresponding Author: *Nesli Akarsu, nesli.akarsu86@gmail.com*

Kadivar et al., 2016). Members of a school with a positive moral atmosphere have a common sense of purpose, and they contribute actively to this goal and feel engaged. Therefore, school moral atmosphere has a critical role in defining how students view each other and school and how they establish relationships and behave in school (Karabanova and Sadvnikova, 2014). Students in a positive moral atmosphere may have higher levels of positive feelings toward school and thus higher engagement with school. However, quantitative studies are necessary to define the relationship between students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere and their engagement with the school. From this point of view, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of the school moral atmosphere and the levels of their engagement with school.

Student Engagement with School

Student engagement with school is defined as a psychological investment made by students in order to learn. As a result, a student with a high level of engagement is both academically successful and internalizes and applies what he or she learns by attempting to acquire more than what his or her school provides. A student with a high level of engagement with school has self-motivation to learn, and he or she is motivated for not only gaining good grades and the teacher's appreciation but also for comprehension and competence (Newmann, 1992). Student engagement can be defined as having positive feelings about education and a sense of belonging to school, as well as developing positive relationships with other students (Arastaman, 2006).

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) examined student engagement in three aspects, including behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement. Affective engagement involves a student's positive reactions to school, teachers, and friends. A student who has positive feelings and enthusiasm about school activities and attends with great interest has a high level of affective engagement. A student's behavioral engagement is defined as his or her observance of school and classroom rules, as well as participation in learning and academic activities. A student with high behavioral engagement is active in both academic and social participation. Cognitive engagement is defined as a student's willingness to learn complex and challenging subjects and to pay effort and attention to learning them. A student with high cognitive engagement focuses on being specialized and successful in challenging fields. Ladd and Dinella (2009) discovered that students with high behavioral and affective engagement outperformed others in terms of academic progress.

Research on the antecedents and consequences of student engagement shows that factors related to the school context are associated with engagement. It also reveals that school engagement affects the academic and social development of students. For instance, Appleton et al. (2006) developed a taxonomy addressing the antecedents and outputs of student engagement. This taxonomy suggests that classmates who share common educational ideas and school values, make a similar academic effort, and have a similar desire to learn may lead to greater student engagement. A school atmosphere with positive teacher-student relationships and clear expectations of teachers and administrators, as well as the quality of educational activities, may also have a positive impact on student involvement. A student with a high level of engagement with school may be expected to have high academic success (graduation average, completed studies, etc.) and advanced social communication skills with adults and peers, to be aware of their own feelings, and to be capable of settling conflicts in case of disagreement.

The studies on school engagement suggest that the students with a high level of engagement with school make a greater psychological investment in learning; and they internalize what they learn (Newmann, 1992) and have higher academic success and motivation; it is less likely for them to have school problems such as guiltiness, truancy, and substance use (Savi, 2011); they have higher autonomy and show positive social behaviors more frequently (Cemalçılar, 2010). In addition, it has been determined that students' levels of commitment are associated with their self-esteem and positive relationships at school (Birch and Ladd, 1997).

Moral Atmosphere

Moral atmosphere was first addressed by Kohlberg and defined as the connection between moral reasoning skills and behaviors (Power and Kohlberg, 1994; Koops et al., 2010). School morale acts as an implicit curriculum in school. What teachers tell students to do or not do and students' right-wrong and good-bad judgments in school create the school's moral atmosphere (De Vries and Zan, 1994). Kohlberg considered schools as democratic education centers and highlighted that they should be shaped as models of a just community. According to Kohlberg, the ideal of "just community" is the most consistent approach with democratic communities' understanding of education (Çinemre, 2013). Therefore, Kohlberg developed the "Just Community Approach" in order to serve as a model of democratic management for improving school moral atmosphere and individual moral development (Edgington, 2000).

According to Foa, Brugman, and Mancini (2012), the school moral atmosphere consists of two basic dimensions: school and classroom. The school dimension is related to the sense of belonging attributed to the school by the students and the level of perception of the school as a community. The class dimension is related to the extent to which the helping norm is shared by classmates and teachers, the perception of classmates' and teachers' focus of responsibility in the implementation of the helping norm, identification with the class, and whether the norms are seen as a value by most of their classmates.

Relationship between School Moral Atmosphere and Student Engagement with School

Moral atmosphere has two effects on education: first, it acts as an implicit curriculum through which moral values and norms, a sign of moral values, can be transferred indirectly to students for moral education. Secondly, it provides social contexts where students interact with their classroom peers and teachers and can affect each other (Garrod, 1992). According to Foa, Brugman, and Mancini (2012), students' positive perceptions of school in terms of its moral atmosphere increase their sense of belonging to school, enable them to identify themselves with school willingly, establish positive social relationships in school, and hence prevent them from quitting school. This situation is also accompanied by an internalization of a sense of responsibility towards school. At the level of the classroom, the norms that students share with each other and their teachers and the content of these norms, whether a sense of responsibility is internalized or not, as well as students' level of identification with the classroom, become important. Students perceive the school's moral atmosphere positively and at a high level when shared norms are abundant and students internalize their responsibilities based on their own desire rather than outside pressure. In addition, students' sense of belonging to the classroom enables them to identify themselves with the class and hence affects their perception of the moral atmosphere positively.

Reviewing the related literature, there are a great number of studies suggesting that school moral atmosphere is influential on students' behaviors, academic performance, career planning, academic and real-life attitudes, motivations, and social and personal approaches (Host et al. 1998; Brugman et al., 2003). Positive school moral atmospheres create contexts in which students believe they should act in accordance with their responsibilities and within a moral framework toward their teachers and peers. Moreover, it involves a high sense of unity, social behavioral norms, and a strong sense of community (Puka, 1994). Therefore, a sense of unity and a positive atmosphere in school may be expected to have a positive effect on cognitive, behavioral and affective engagement. However, more studies are needed to be conducted to define the relationship between school moral atmosphere and students' engagement with school.

Aim of Research

The main aim of the study is to examine the relationship between the secondary school students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere and their engagement with school. Based on this main purpose, answers to the following questions will be sought:

1. What do secondary school students think about the school moral atmosphere?
2. What is the level of secondary school students' engagement with school?
3. Is there a significant difference in terms of gender in secondary school students' perceptions of the school moral atmosphere?
4. Is there a significant difference in terms of gender in secondary school students' levels of engagement with school?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the secondary school students' perceptions of the school moral atmosphere and their engagement with school?
6. Are secondary school students' perceptions of the school moral atmosphere a significant predictor of their levels of engagement with school?

Method

Research Model

A correlational research model was adopted in this study. Balcı (2010) attempts to define the existence and degree of relationships between two or more variables (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, and Demirel, 2014). This study is a correlational research project because its main aim is to define the relationship between the secondary school students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere and their levels of engagement with school.

Population and Sample

The research population consists of the students attending the secondary schools in Elazığ during the 2016-2017 academic year. The random sampling method was used in the study. Within the scope of this study, the scale was

applied to 1,000 students who were picked up randomly from the secondary schools in Elazığ the number of scales included in the analysis is 872. The research sample consists of 395 male and 473 female students. 405 students are in the seventh grade, and 459 are in the eighth.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Student Engagement Scale, which was developed by Fredricks et al. (2003, 2005) and adapted to Turkish by Akin et al. (2013), and the School Moral Atmosphere Questionnaire, which was developed by Host et al. (1998) and translated and adapted to Turkish by the researcher, were used for data collection.

The Student Engagement Scale (SES) is a 5-likert type scale consisting of 15 items, and it has three aspects (affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement). The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scale was calculated at 0.78. The internal consistency coefficients of the affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement dimensions were calculated as 0.79, 0.75, and 0.74, respectively. A high score on the scale indicates that the student's engagement with school is high.

The School Moral Atmosphere Questionnaire (SMAQ) is a two-part scale intended to measure the school's moral atmosphere. The first part is a multiple-choice scale involving dilemmas related to school life. This scale that presents two school dilemmas, "helping" and "theft," was created in order to measure students' moral reasoning and accordingly their perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere. The second section, "Questions about You and Your School," is a 5-likert type section with 33 items. This scale is composed of two aspects: "school as a community" (community) and "value attached to school" (valuation). The second part of the SMAQ, "Questions on You and Your School," was used in the study. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated at 0.73 for the "school as a community" and "value attached to school" dimensions. A high score on the scale indicates that the student's perception of the school's morale is positive.

Previous studies have shown that family income and parent-child relationships are variables associated with school engagement (Perdue et al., 2009; Veiga et al., 2016). For this reason, family income and the number of siblings in the family were included in the study as control variables. Frequency, percentage, mean value, t-test, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used for the analysis of the scales used and the data collected in this study.

Findings

This part states the findings obtained in the study as well as the comments based on these findings. The mean values and standard deviation values that indicate the secondary school students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere and their levels of engagement in school are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of school moral atmosphere and engagement with school

Scales and Aspects	N	\bar{x}	SS
School Moral Atmosphere	872	3.47	0.54
Value Attached to School	872	3.44	0.57
School as Community	872	3.56	0.64
Student Engagement with School	872	3.62	0.72
Behavioural Engagement	872	4.02	0.80
Affective Engagement	872	3.70	0.94
Cognitive Engagement	872	3.22	1.00

When the values in Table 1 are reviewed, it is seen that students expressed their opinion at the level of "Agree" with respect to the overall school moral atmosphere scale ($\bar{x}=3.47$) as well as its aspects, including the *value attached to school* ($\bar{x}=3.44$) and *school as community* ($\bar{x}=3.56$). Based on these findings, it can be suggested that students have positive perceptions of their school's moral atmosphere. It is seen that students presented their opinions at the level of "usually" with respect to the overall student engagement scale ($\bar{x}=3.62$) and its aspects, *behavioral engagement* ($\bar{x}=4.02$) and *affective engagement* ($\bar{x}=3.70$), and at the level of "occasionally" with respect to the aspect of *cognitive engagement* ($\bar{x}=3.22$). From this finding, it can be stated that students' engagement with school is mostly focused on behavioral aspects, and their cognitive engagement is at a lower level. In this context, students' levels of exhibiting such behaviors as observing school rules, avoiding detrimental behaviors, fulfilling classroom tasks, and participating in sporting and managerial activities when required are higher than their levels of internalizing what they learn in school and making psychological investments in

learning. The results of the comparison, by the variable of gender, of the students' perceptions of the school moral atmosphere and their levels of engagement with school are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of the students' perceptions of school moral atmosphere and engagement with school by the variable of gender

Variables	Levene's Test		Male N=395		Female N=473		t	p
	F	p	\bar{X}	SS	\bar{X}	SS		
School Moral Atmosphere	0.52	.81	3.36	0.54	3.56	0.52	-5.55*	.00
Value Attached to School	0.21	.64	3.32	0.57	3.54	0.55	-5.56*	.00
School as Community	0.04	.83	3.46	0.65	3.63	0.61	-3.86*	.00
Student Engagement with School	3.12	.78	3.48	0.65	3.74	0.61	-5.32*	.00
Behavioural Engagement	2.09	.14	3.83	0.72	4.17	0.84	-6.2*	.00
Affective Engagement	4.08	.04	3.56	1.05	3.81	0.82	-3.9	.00
Cognitive Engagement	9.95	.002	3.11	1.05	3.31	0.96	-2.9	.00

Mann Whitney U Test for the affective and cognitive engagement dimensions

Variable	MWU	p	Mean rank	
			Male	Female
Affective Engagement	77732.50*	.00	394.79	467.66
Cognitive Engagement	82717.00*	.00	407.41	457.12

According to the data in Table 2, there is a significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere. ($t=-5.55$; $p<.05$). Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the school moral atmosphere dimensions of "value attached school" and "school as community" between male and female students, favoring female students. Accordingly, it can be said that female students perceive the moral atmosphere of their schools more positively.

A significant difference was found between male and female students' school engagement scores and behavioral commitment dimension scores in favor of female students ($t=-5.32$, $p<.05$; $t=-6.2$, $p<.05$). Mann Whitney U test was conducted for the dimensions of *affective engagement* and *cognitive engagement*. According to MWU test results, there was a significant difference between the female and male students' affective engagement and cognitive engagement levels in favor of female students (MWU_{affective} = 77732.50, Male = 394.79, Female = 467.66, $p<.05$; MWU_{cognitive} = 82717.00, Male = 407.41, Female = 457.12). These findings may suggest that female students' levels of engagement with school are higher than those of male students. The correlation matrix indicating the relationship between the students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere and their levels of engagement with school is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation matrix indicating the relationships between the variables in the research

	A	1	2	B	I	II	III	C	D
A. School Moral Atmosphere	1								
1. Value Attached to School	.96**	1							
2. School as Community	.82**	.63**	1						
B. Student Engagement with School	.57**	.52**	.52**	1					
I. Behavioural Engagement	.42**	.41**	.33**	.63**	1				
II. Affective Engagement	.59**	.55**	.54**	.85**	.40**	1			
III. Cognitive Engagement	.28**	.23**	.31**	.78**	.28**	.46**	1		
C. Family Income	-.037	-.016	-.072*	-.05	-.019	-.07*	-.02	1	
D. Number of Siblings	.020	.024	.005	-.04	-.024	-.008	-.08*	-.07*	1

* $p<.05$; N= 872; ** $p<.01$; N= 872

According to the data in Table 3, there is a significant and positive relationship between students' perceptions of the moral atmosphere at school and their engagement with school ($r = .57$, $p<.01$). Besides, there is a significant and positive relationship between the students' engagement with school and the aspects of *value attached to school*

($r = .52, p < .01$) and *school as a community* ($r = .52, p < .01$) of the school's moral atmosphere. In other words, the more the values students share at school and their sense of belonging to a community increase, the more their engagement with school will increase.

It was discovered that there is a significant and positive relationship between the students' perception of the school's moral atmosphere and their behavioral engagement ($r = .42, p < .01$), cognitive engagement ($r = .28, p < .01$) and affective engagement ($r = .59, p < .01$), all of which are aspects of student engagement with school. Accordingly, it is seen that there is a significant and positive relationship between the students' perception of the school moral atmosphere and their school attendance (behavioral aspect) and their interest and curiosity for challenging and complex subjects (cognitive aspect). Likewise, there is a significant and positive relationship between the students' perception of the school's moral atmosphere and their level of interest, engagement, curiosity, enthusiasm, and positive feelings (affective aspect).

One of the demographic variables, family income, was found to have a significant and negative relationship with school as community, one of the aspects of the school moral atmosphere questionnaire ($r = -.072, p < .05$). In addition, it is seen that there is a significant and negative relationship between family income and affective engagement ($r = -.07, p < .05$). Accordingly, the higher the student family's socio-economic level gets, the lower the level of student's perception of school as a community and his/her affective engagement with school becomes. The results of the regression analysis that was conducted in order to determine whether the students' perception of the moral atmosphere of the school they attend is a significant predictor of their cognitive engagement are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Level of prediction of the students' cognitive engagement by their perceptions of school moral atmosphere

Predictive Variables	R	R ²	R ² Variance (ΔR^2)	F Variance p	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Standard					3.472	.109		31.716	.000
Step 1	.085	.007	.005	.042					
Income					-2.075	.000	-.030	-.873	.383
Sibling					-.064	.027	-.080	-2.423	.016
Step 2	.328	.108	.104	.000					
Income					-6.052	.000	-.009	-.267	.789
Sibling					-.065	.025	-.084	-2.590	.010
Value attached to sch.					.116	.073	.066	1.585	.113
School as community					.427	.066	.271	6.463	.000

Table 4 shows that the variable of sibling at Step 1 of the analysis is a significant predictor of the points obtained from the cognitive engagement scale ($\Delta R^2 = .005, p < .05$). When the regression coefficient ($\beta = -.080, p < .05$) is examined, it is clear that the number of the student's siblings predicts cognitive engagement points in a negative and significant way. On the other side, the student family's income level is not a significant predictor of cognitive engagement points.

The points that the students at Step 2 of the analysis get from the aspect of *school as community* are a significant predictor of cognitive engagement level ($\beta = .271, p < .05$). Nonetheless, it is evident that the points given to the aspect of *value attached to school* aren't a significant predictor of cognitive engagement level ($\beta = .066, p > .05$). When the effect of demographic variables is controlled, it can be said that around 10% of the students' cognitive engagement levels result from their perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere.

The results of the multiple regression analysis that was conducted in order to determine whether the students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere are a significant predictor of their affective engagement are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Level of prediction of the students' affective engagement by their perceptions of school moral atmosphere

Predictive Variables	R	R ²	R ² Variance (ΔR^2)	F Variance p	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
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Standard					3.859	.102		37.688	.000
Step 1	.076	.006	.004	.081					
Income					-4.966	.000	-.076	-2.234	.026
Sibling					-.010	.025	-.014	-.423	.672
Step 2	.606	.368	.365	.000					
Income					-3.128	.000	-.048	-1.756	.079
Sibling					-.016	.020	-.022	-.820	.413
Value attached to school					.580	.058	.354	10.038	.000
School as community					.459	.052	.311	8.816	.000

According to the data in Table 6, the variables of income and number of siblings at Step 1 of the analysis don't have a significant relationship with the points obtained from the affective engagement scale ($\Delta R^2 = .004$, $p > .05$). It is seen that the points of *value attached to school* ($\beta = .354$, $p < .05$) and *school as community* ($\beta = .311$, $p < .05$) at Step 2 of the analysis are a significant predictor of affective engagement level. Based on this finding, it is concluded that around 36% of the students' affective engagement levels result from their positive perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere. In other words, it can be suggested that the perception of the school's moral atmosphere has an important impact on their affective engagement.

The results of multiple regression analysis, which was conducted in order to determine whether the students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere are a significant predictor of their behavioral engagement, are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Level of prediction of the students' behavioural engagement by their perceptions on school moral atmosphere

Predictive Variables	R	R ²	R ² Variance (ΔR^2)	F Variance p	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Standard					4.099	.087		46.871	.000
Step 1	.032	.001	.001	.640					
Income					-1.175	.000	-.021	-.619	.536
Sibling					-.016	.021	-.026	-.761	.447
Step 2	.422	.178	.175	.000					
Income					-3.780	.000	-.007	-.219	.827
Sibling					-.021	.019	-.033	-1.078	.281
Value attached to school					.456	.056	.326	8.126	.000
School as community					.163	.051	.130	3.234	.001

Considering the data in Table 7, the variables of income and number of siblings at Step 1 of the analysis don't have a significant relationship with the points obtained from the behavioral engagement scale ($\Delta R^2 = .001$, $p > .05$). It is seen that the points of *value attached to school* ($\beta = .326$, $p < .05$) and *school as* ($\beta = .130$, $p < .05$) at Step 2 of the analysis are a significant predictor of behavioral engagement level. According to this finding, it can be concluded that around 17% of the students' behavioral engagement levels result from their perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere. In other words, the students' positive perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere improve their behavioral engagement with school.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

It was concluded that student engagement with school is high in affective and behavioral engagement aspects but moderate in cognitive engagement aspects. Arastaman (2006) discovered that students only study to the extent necessary to save the situation and give up when difficulties arise, resulting in low levels of cognitive engagement. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies that indicate student engagement levels (Kalaycı and Özdemir, 2013; Özdemir and Kalaycı, 2013). According to the findings of the study, students have positive perceptions on the moral atmosphere of the school they attend. Therefore, students perceive their schools as a community and feel themselves a member of this community and attach value to their schools. Brugman, Tavecchio and et al. (1995) discovered that most of the students having participated in their studies

attach value to school as an institution where they meet their academic needs. These results lead to the conclusion that students feel themselves as part of the school community and experience emotional attachment to the institution. On the other hand, their cognitive engagement to school is constrained by the academic challenges that students face during the teaching process.

One of the study's findings is that the perception of the moral climate in schools varies by gender. The study revealed that female students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere are more positive than those of male students. This finding shows parallelism with the results of Lee's study (2008), in which Lee discovered that students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere vary in favor of female students. While female students regard school as an important institution, male students place a moderate value on it. De Wolff and Brugman (2010) found out that female students perceive school as a community and themselves as members of that community at a higher level than do male students. Female students require more to be successful than male students (Çelikkaleli, Gökçakan and Çapri, 2005), and they perceive school as a place that improves and protects them, whereas male students perceive school as a place that puts pressure on them (Özdemir and Kalaycı, 2013; Bellici, 2015), may have resulted in a higher level of engagement with school and a positive perception of the school's moral atmosphere.

Based on the research findings, there is a significant and positive relationship between the total points of school moral atmosphere and cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement points. Accordingly, the more the students' positive perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere increase, the more their cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement levels increase. The common values, norms, and beliefs shared by students in school and the increasing degree of sharing these values and beliefs have a positive impact on their engagement with school. In other words, students' positive perception of the common moral values shared in school improves their engagement with school. The studies conducted found that a supportive and positive school atmosphere increases participation in school activities and a sense of belonging to school and decreases a sense of estrangement and alienation from school (Osterman, 2000; Anderman, 2003). oodenow (1992) proposed that students' lack of complete belonging to school as a social system may result in low levels of active attendance, academic success, and even dropping out. Positive school morale, which is accompanied by a sense of belonging and the feeling that school is a valuable institution, affects students' engagement with school to a large extent. There are studies that demonstrate the emergence of negative outcomes such as depression, jealousy, feeling lonely, drug and alcohol addiction, increased absenteeism, and violence tendencies when a student doesn't feel like he or she belongs at school (Anderman, 2002; Osterman, 2000). These results support the effect of a positive school moral atmosphere on behavioral and affective engagement.

A negative and significant relationship was discovered between the students' income level and their perception of school as a community and their affective engagement with school. In other words, students with higher income levels feel more connected to their school community than students with lower income levels. This situation can be interpreted as increasing the diversity of the places where they can be socialized based on their income level. Considering that the students in the low-income group can meet their need for socialization mostly in school, it will be possible for students to increase the number of environments where they can be socialized as their income level gets higher and higher. Unlike the findings of this study, other studies in the literature have discovered that the rate of quitting school for students with high income is 50% lower than that of students with low income, and that students from low socioeconomic families have a two-fold higher chance of quitting school than others (Rumberger and Thomas, 2000; Sarı, 2013).

Considering the relationship between the students' perceptions of school moral atmosphere and their cognitive engagement levels, it is seen that a positive school moral atmosphere is an important predictor of students' cognitive engagement with school. The fact that students perceive school as a community and feel themselves belonging to the school community improves their cognitive engagement. A student who perceives himself or herself as part of school is more willing to volunteer to participate in challenging activities other than his or her own tasks in school compared to others. The study's findings are consistent with those of Özdemir and Kalaycı (2013), who discovered that when children perceive their school as a home or a place where they can grow and be protected, their engagement with school increases.

According to the findings of this study, a positive and significant relationship was found between the students' positive perception of the school's moral atmosphere and their affective and behavioral engagement. Considering the relationship between the students' perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere and their affective engagement levels, it was found that a positive perception of the school's moral atmosphere is an important predictor of the students' affective engagement with the school. A student who attaches value to school as an institution can be proud of school properties and achievements. This type of student feels a sense of belonging at

school and values the school as a community. Aypay and Eryilmaz (2011) found out that the students who have lost interest in school don't like school, they start seeing school as a boring place, they feel unhappy in school, and hence they spend time there in an inefficient and effective way over time. This situation may be caused by the fact that the student has a broken emotional bond with school and loses his or her sense of being a part of the school community. It can be predicted that a student with a positive perception of the school's moral atmosphere will follow school and classroom rules more and participate in social activities apart from classroom activities. It was revealed that positive perceptions of the school's moral atmosphere are a significant predictor of students' behavioral engagement with school. Students who perceive their schools as communities and place value on them are more engaged with school in terms of behavior. Gottfredson (2001) found out that when students perceive the school atmosphere as positive and feel they are respected, their engagement with school increases. Karababa, Oral, and Dilmaç (2018) determined that the students who feel themselves valuable and a part of a social group in school have a high level of engagement with school. Based on these results, it was concluded that students' sense of attachment to school and school as a community are important predictors of students' engagement with school. The positive perceptions of the students regarding the school's moral atmosphere bring about the positive reactions of the students to the school, their teachers, and their friends. It also increases the level of students' compliance with school and classroom rules and strengthens their academic and social participation.

The following suggestions can be made based on the results of the study:

- The policies determined in our education system are mainly focused on taking measures to improve academic success. The study results allow us to understand that educational policies should be focused on 'improving students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with school, taking into account that student engagement is one of the most important determinants of academic success.
- Students' positive perception of the school's moral atmosphere increases their engagement with the school. As a result, increasing extracurricular sports and aptitude classes or training courses, as well as providing study halls where students can satisfy their social needs aside from the learning environment, can improve students' engagement with school.
- Students want to be a part of school as a social community before valuing it as an official institution with rules. If school administrators, teachers, and other staff with whom students interact in school approach students based on such awareness in line with "human values and respect" and it may enable students to feel valuable in school.
- More attention can be focused on measurement-assessment techniques that will be able to take into account students' positive attitudes and feelings towards school and their effort paid to it apart from their observable participation in class.
- Schools can create a positive moral atmosphere by defining the common values adopted by all school members and endeavoring to strengthen them.

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Author (s) Contribution Rate

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical Approval

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