

**Reasons for High School Dropout: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study Based on Students'  
Common Experiences**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to describe the shared experiences of high school students who have left school. The study is based on the qualitative research pattern of "Descriptive Phenomenology". The sample of the study consists of 10 students who left school at the secondary level. "Criteria sampling" which is among purposeful sampling methods was used when determining the sample. The data obtained from semi-structured interviews with students who had left the school were subjected to content analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis method. MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program was used when this analysis was carried out. As a result of the analysis, it is seen that students leave school due to reasons such as low academic achievement, class repetition, absenteeism, poor economic situation, work, reluctance, apathy, negative behaviors, bad peer group, bad social environment, disciplinary referrals, peer bullying, different career orientations and negative role models. In the study, these reasons were classified as low academic motivation, risky behaviors and social disadvantage.

**Keywords:** Early School Leaving, School Dropout, High School Students

**Introduction**

Prepare your Since each country's education policy is different, the definition of school dropout also differs from country to country. Although the definitions of school dropout put forward by countries are different, all countries accept that this is a serious problem. The current trend is that by 2030, 420 million of the 1.4 billion children and young people in low- and middle-income countries will lack elementary school skills, meaning they will not complete primary school; it is estimated that 825 million students will not continue their education to gain secondary school skills (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, [UNICEF], 2014). This leads states and non-governmental organizations to work on a number of issues such as reducing school dropout rates, reintroducing students who leave school, and determining the causes of school dropouts.

Research suggests that adolescents in many low- and middle-income countries have a higher risk of dropping out of school before completing secondary education compared to students in high-income countries. Furthermore, the data shows that these risks are greater for young people living in poor, female, rural areas and from nomadic or ethnic minorities (Nakajima et al., 2018; Wils et al., 2019). However, the results regarding the effect of gender on dropout are not consistent with each other. While some studies indicate that women are a significant risk group for school dropout (Mussida et al., 2019;

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Nakajima et al., 2018; Prakash et al., 2017), on the contrary, it is also stated in some studies that boys are at more risk of leaving school (Borgna & Struffolino, 2017; Doll et al., 2013; European Statistics Office, 2018; Fan & Wolters, 2014). Although many factors can contribute to a young person's risk of leaving high school, pregnancy is a particularly important risk for young women (Fall & Roberts, 2012). 30% of young women who leave high school cite pregnancy or parenting as the reason for leaving school, and only 40% of young mother's finish high school (Stoner et al., 2019; Timæus & Moultrie, 2015).

Students who deviate from social or legal norms with certain behaviors such as tobacco, alcohol or drug use, aggression, school escape and unsafe sexual intercourse are more likely to leave school (Özer et al., 2011; Tabuchi et al., 2018). Students with many absent days may be in the risk group for dropping out (Karacabey & Boyacı, 2018). Indeed, Tabuchi et al. (2018) found that adolescents who were late for more than 10 days or who were absent were at high risk of leaving high school. Balfanz et al. (2007) determined that 3/4 of the students who were absent for 30 days or more during an education period had dropped out of school.

The nature and strength of the relationship between parent and child or student and school is one of the important factors that determines the risk of dropping out of school (Jimerson et al. 2000). There are a number of factors in school dropout originating from school. Parents' participation in the school (being interested in the student's education, monitoring the student, communication with the school, etc.), problems in the teacher-student relationship and negative peer models play an important role in the students leaving the school (Boyacı & Öz, 2018). A number of factors such as disinterested teachers, negative school climate and inadequate counseling services may increase the risk of school dropouts (Ottosen et al., 2019).

Familial factors can also be cited as an important determinant for school dropout. In this context, the education level of parents may be an effective factor on the probability of dropping out of school. Children, especially those with parents who have not completed primary education, are significantly more likely to drop out of school (Farah & Upadhyay, 2017; Mussida et al., 2019). Students with a large family population may have a high risk of dropping out of school (Bridgeland, 2010; Yadav et al., 2010). Indeed, Farah and Upadhyay (2017) thus, students in families with more than three children and in households with more than five individuals may have a higher chance of leaving school. The economic situation of the family can have a significant impact on the risk of dropout (Karacabey & Boyacı, 2018; White & Kelly, 2010). So much so that students in underprivileged families maybe four times more likely to leave school than students with good finances (White & Kelly, 2010). Students who work outside of school may have a high risk of dropping out of school and decreasing their school success (Montmarquette et al., 2007). Ermish and Francesconi (2001) state that Hispanic and Afro-American students are at high risk of leaving school.

Research shows that high school dropouts lack skills such as perseverance, determination, harmony, communication to cope with the academic and social challenges of high school (Ottosen et al., 2017). Low academic achievement (Fortin et al., 2013; Karacabey & Boyacı, 2018; Koçtürk et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2017) and class repetition appear to be a factor that increases the risk of dropping out of school (Jimerson et al. 2000).

Studies on school dropouts reveal that that dropping out is not a sudden event or a sudden decision made by the student, but a process (Lan & Lanthier, 2003). Moreover, many factors can be considered to

be effective in a student dropping out of school. Dropping out is considered to be a risky behavior in every country, as it can negatively affect both the well-being of individuals and their future (Janosz et al., 2000). Various negative consequences such as unemployment, low income, health problems, early death and criminal behavior are common in young people leaving school (Itzhaki et al., 2018).

Research shows that young people who leave school are more likely to engage in many risky behaviors, including the use of tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and other drugs (Townsend et al., 2007). School dropouts are four times more likely to experience negative individual outcomes, such as arrest, dismissal, use of illegal substances, and poor health status than individuals with high school degrees (Lansford et al., 2016). Individuals who leave school also have higher rates of imprisonment. School dropout makes a person five times more likely to be sentenced to prison until the age of 30 (Backman, 2017). As a matter of fact, Harlow (2003) states that approximately 2/3 of the detainees in public prisons in the United States are individuals who have left school at the secondary level.

Accordingly, reducing the number of students leaving school or reducing dropout rates in other words becomes one of the important issues in the education policies and visions adopted by the countries. However, despite various measures taken to reduce school dropout rates, school dropout remains one of the important problems in the education systems of countries. In India, approximately 12 million primary and secondary school-age children are out of school, and despite government encouragement, 42% of boys and 32% of girls did not complete secondary school (UNICEF, 2014). In the United States, dropout rates among African-American and Hispanic students have fallen from 13% to 7% and from 32% to 12% respectively, but in some major metropolitan areas, such as Baltimore, Detroit, Oklahoma City and Omaha, the rate is around 50% (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2005). The Ministry of Education in Turkey (2013), according to data released by the numbers of students leaving secondary education is increasing in all education and training in half. According to these data, the total number of students who dropped out in 2010-2011 is approximately 255 thousand. When the data provided by the European Statistics Office (2018) are examined, the proportion of students leaving school in Turkey is about 30%, while the average of the member states of the European Union is about 10%.

### **The Current Study**

Although previous studies have provided evidence of the reasons why students drop out of secondary schools (Karacabey & Boyacı, 2018), vocational high schools (Taş et al., 2013) and general high schools (Tatar, 2016), it is noted that there is little information about students' perceptions of school dropout. In addition, according to the views of administrators and teachers, it is observed that the factors affecting primary school students' dropout are examined (Aküzüm et al., 2015). It is seen in the literature that the self-perceptions and guidance requirements of the secondary school students who left school (Tunç, 2019) and the factors that reduced the risk of leaving school (Özer et al., 2011) were examined with quantitative methods.

The details of the reasons for dropping out of secondary school students in Turkey are not yet fully known. Uncovering the factors associated with school dropout is important in terms of determining the factors that will enable students to continue their education life. This study is thought to reveal the underlying mechanisms of school dropout in line with students' opinions. Findings to be obtained; can contribute to the production of solutions for school administrators, families and mental health workers.

It is extremely important to uncover students' perceptions and thoughts when examining the reasons for their school dropout. In order to reduce the number of students leaving school or to prevent students from leaving school, it is very important to determine the reasons for school dropouts, to describe the experiences of the students who leave the school and to conduct research for this purpose. Based on all this information, the main purpose of this study is to determine what are the common experiences of high school students in their decision to drop out of school. For this purpose, the study aims to answer the following question:

1. What do the reasons high school students drop out of school based on common experience?

### **Method**

The method of this study is "qualitative" and the pattern is "descriptive phenomenology". Descriptive phenomenology is a method to determine the common experiences of individuals about a designated subject, event or situation (Creswell, 2019).

### **Participants**

In this study, "Criteria Sampling" which is among the purpose sampling methods was used when determining the interviewees (Creswell, 2018). In this study, interviews were conducted with 10 people, 8 men and 2 women, who met the criteria of "dropping out of school at the secondary level". The average age of the interviewees is 18.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Information of the Individuals Interviewed*

Participant	Gender	Age	Dropout Year	Dropout Grade
P1	Male	16	2019	9. Grade
P2	Male	18	2018	10. Grade
P3	Male	17	2019	9. Grade
P4	Male	19	2016	9. Grade
P5	Male	16	2019	9. Grade
P6	Male	18	2019	9. Grade
P7	Male	19	2019	9. Grade
P8	Female	19	2018	9. Grade
P9	Female	19	2018	9. Grade
P10	Male	19	2019	11. Grade

### **Data Collection Method**

In this research, among data collection techniques "interview" was used and among interview types "semi-structured interview" was used. Accordingly, a semi-structured interview form was prepared by the researchers. A pilot study was conducted by the researchers before the interview form was prepared. After this application, corrections were made on topics such as questionnaire and order of questions. For the interview questions that were subsequently created, feedback was received from three different researchers about the language and structure characteristics of the questions and gave the final form of the opinion form. Interview questions include questions such as "What happened in the time between starting and leaving school?" "What were the life events that influenced your decision to leave school?", "What kind of student would you describe yourself as?"

### **Procedures**

Before the study was implemented, a pilot study was carried out to determine the semi-structured interview form, face-to-face interviews to be conducted, and analysis strategies. The findings of the pilot study were presented as an oral presentation at the relevant conference. Based on the information obtained from the pilot study, the research was restructured and an application was made for ethics committee permission. The conduct of the research was approved by Atatürk University Social and Humanities Ethics Committee Presidency, Educational Sciences Unit Ethics Committee approval dated 14.02.2020 and numbered 03/08. Before collecting data, individuals were given an informed consent form. In the later stages of the study, contact information was obtained in order to reach the interviewed individuals again. In line with the purpose of the research, an average of 30 minute interviews were conducted with 10 participants who were determined by criteria sampling method. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder after the participants' approval. When the data started to show similarities, the data collection process was ended.

### **Data Analysis**

Audio recordings of the interviews with the participants were transcribed by the researchers. The interview records that were then transferred to the article were analyzed with the MAXQDA program. Content analysis as a qualitative data analysis method was used when analyzing the data. The coding process was done together by the researchers. In the transcribed interviews, the codes were determined by marking the statements that were thought to be effective in the participant leaving the school. After the coding process, similar codes were combined to create themes.

### **Validity and Reliability**

#### **Expert opinion**

Expert opinion was consulted at various stages of the research. First of all, interview questions were sent to three different researchers and feedback was received. These specialists work as research assistants, lecturers and doctoral faculty members in the Department of Educational Sciences. In line with the feedback from the experts, the interview questions were revised and the negotiations started. In addition, during the data analysis process, the coding made were sent to these three experts and feedback was received.

### **Triangulation**

Additional data sources were used to detail and verify the participants' statements in the interviews. In this context, triangulation was made using the certificates and learning documents of the individuals interviewed.

### Participant approval

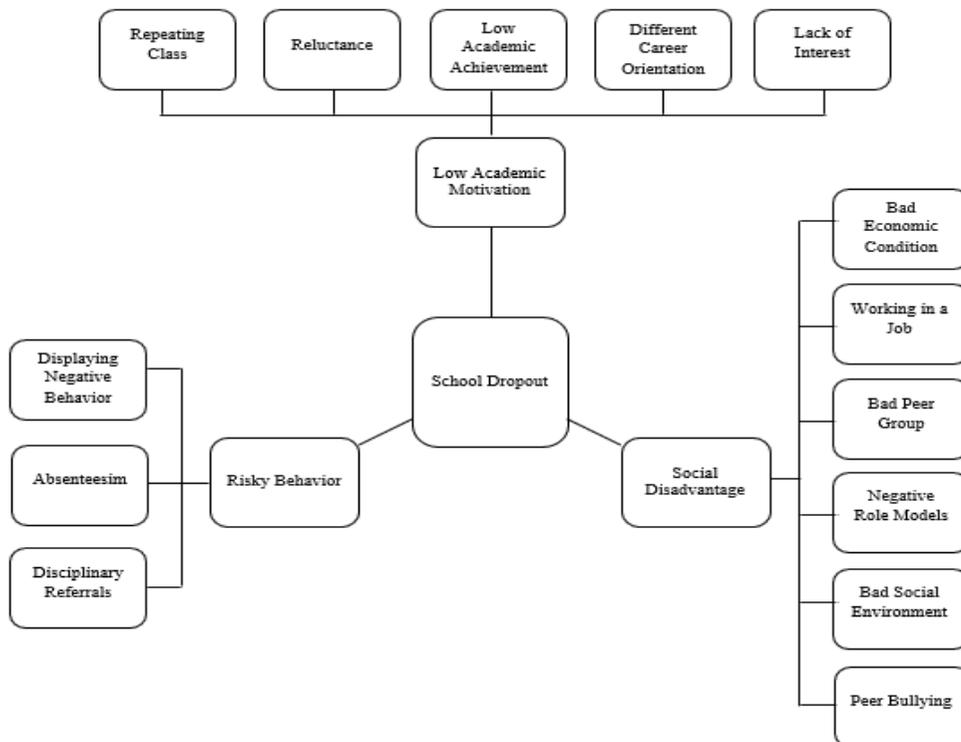
The coding made by the researchers were sent to the interviewed individuals and they were asked to give feedback. Accordingly, a list of questions was sent to the interviewed individuals with questions such as "Do you want to add anything to the interview records transcribed?", "Do you think there are places where the researcher made mistakes when transcribing the interview recordings?", "Do you agree with the classifications for your reasons for dropping out of school?" The individuals interviewed reported that they approved the transcriptions of the interviews and the coding sent to them and that they had nothing to add.

### Findings

The findings from interviews with students who had left the school and the statements of each participant were included in this section in order to better describe why the participants left school. To ease the understanding of the findings reached, interrelated codes with common characteristics are classified under certain themes (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Reasons High School Students Dropout of School



### Findings on Low Academic Motivation Theme

Low academic motivation theme states that the determination of the participants to attend school and the willingness to fulfill the responsibilities in the school are low and they have negative attitudes towards the school. Repeating a class, not wanting to go to school, low academic achievement, different career orientations and apathy codes were collected under the theme of "Academic Motivation".

During the interviews, it was observed that the participants had statements about having repeated a class. When the confirmations of the interviewed individuals are examined, it is seen that they had repeated a class. These expressions are encoded with the label "Class Repetition". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"I've failed a class twice. After that, I had no desire to attend school (P3)."*

*"I was always getting grades like 10, 15 from the exams. My classes were all bad. As a result of my lesson grades, I failed (P6)."*

*"I failed because my grades were bad. I decided to leave school while re-attending ninth grade (P7)."*

*"I repeated ninth grade because my grades were low. I didn't attend school when I failed (P10)."*

When the confirmations used for the triangulation are examined, it can also be seen that the participants have repeated a class. As a matter of fact, it was determined that Participant 2 did a repetition of the class in the 2017-2018 academic year. It was found that Participant 3 and Participant 6 did two repetitions in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic year. In the 2018-2019 academic year, participant 5 was found to have repeated the 9th grade. Finally, it was determined that participants 8 and 9 repeated class twice in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic year, when they were in the 9th grade.

In the interviews, participants were found to have made statements that they did not want to go to school. These expressions are encoded with the label "Reluctance". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"I was walking around outside and I didn't want to go to school (P3)."*

*"The lessons, the exams, they took me away from school. I was bored in class and didn't want to go to school (P8)."*

*"I don't like school. School is not for me (P9)."*

During the interviews, it was observed that the participants used statements that their academic achievements at the school were low. When the confirmations of the interviewed individuals were examined, it was seen that the grades they received from the courses were quite low. These expressions are encoded with the label "Low Academic Achievement". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"I have never received a certificate of appreciation or high appreciation in my life (P1)."*

*"My lesson grades at school were not good (P2)."*

*"My course performance was low. I've never understood math class (P4)."*

*"My school achievement was low. Most of my classes were poor. I was going through courses such as painting, physical education, music, but I was always getting low grades from important courses such as mathematics, biology, history (P8)."*

*"All of my classes were bad, but I still wasn't studying (P9)."*

*"As soon as I left school and went home, I was going out. I was wandering around and hanging out with my friends. I wasn't studying, I wasn't doing my homework. As a result, my course performance was low (P10)."*

When the certifications used for triangulation were examined, it was determined that the end-of-year averages and end-of-year course scores of the participants were low. Participants 2 failed six of the 14 courses in the 9th grade and the overall year-end achievement average was 50.1. In the 10th grade, it is noted that he failed all 11 courses. With end-of-year course grades of 12, 18.2 and 18.6, it was observed that the courses in which the student failed the most were philosophy, physics and foreign languages, respectively. It is noted that participant 3 failed 14 of the 16 courses where the overall success average at the end of the 9th grade was 29.9. The course in which participant 3 has the lowest grade with a course score of 6.5 years is mathematics. In addition, it was determined that he had a course score of 22.3 in basic religious studies and Turkish language and literature courses, 27.5 in biology course, 28 in history course and 30 in chemistry course. It was observed that participant 4 received a grade of 15 in mathematics courses, 20 in biology courses and 25 in geography and Turkish language and literature courses. It was determined participant 5 received a grade of 24 in math courses, 36 in geography and foreign language courses and 37 in biology. The overall success average of participant 6 at the end of the 9th grade year was 49.5.

The courses in which participant 6 has the lowest end-of-year course achievement score in 9th grade are respectively; foreign language with a grade of 15, mathematics with 36 and history with 37. When the grade information of participant 6 for the 2017-2018 academic year was examined, it was determined that he had failed all courses. The courses with the lowest grades for participant 7 are, respectively, mathematics with an end-of-year course achievement score of 20, chemistry with an end-of-year course achievement score of 21, and history with an end-of-year course achievement of 30. In addition, the average overall success rate at the end of the year for the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year was 56. In the second semester of the 2018-2019 academic year, it was determined that Participant 7 did not take any exams. It was found that participant 8 did not receive passing grades in 13 of the 14 courses. The courses with the lowest end-of-year course achievement score of Participant 8 were respectively; chemistry an end-of-year course achievement score of 16.2, foreign language an end-of-year course achievement score of 16.6 and geography an end-of-year course achievement score of 20. It was observed that Participant 9 failed 13 of the 14 courses in the 9th grade, only to pass the physical education course with an end-of-year course achievement score of 72. The course with the lowest success score at the end of the year is mathematics with a grade of 14. Finally, it was determined that Participant 10 failed 11 of the 13 courses. The courses in which the participant 10 has the lowest end-of-year course achievement score are respectively; biology with an end-of-year course achievement score of 10, mathematics and history with an end-of-year course achievement score of 15, and geography with an end-of-year course achievement score of 20.

During the interviews, participants were seen to make statements that they wanted to leave school and implement different career plans. These phrases are encoded with the label "Different Career Orientation". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"When I failed the class, I left school and enrolled in a course to become a hafiz (religious worker) (P4)."*

*"I want to be a hairdresser and I didn't think I needed to study at school in this (P9)."*

*"I left school to work at my uncle's fish restaurant in Izmir (P10)."*

During the interviews, participants were found to have made statements about being bored while learning at school and in classes. These phrases are encoded with the label "Lack of Interest". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"I had no desire to study at school (P2)."*

*"I couldn't focus on the lessons, I wasn't listening (P7)."*

*"I wasn't interested in the lessons at all. I never followed the classes. I used to sleep in classes, chat with friends (P9)."*

### **Findings on the Theme of Risky Behaviors**

The theme of risky behaviors refers to students' tendency to exhibit behaviors that do not comply with school rules. The codes for displaying negative behavior, the number of days of absence and disciplinary referrals collected under the theme of "Risky Behaviors".

During the interviews, participants were found to have used statements that they exhibited behaviors that were not in accordance with class and school rules. These statements are encoded with the tag "Showing Negative Behavior". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"My friends and I would sit in the back row and talk throughout the lesson. While the teacher was teaching, we used to surf social media apps like Instagram and Facebook and play Pub-G together (P3)."*

*"While the teacher was teaching, I would put on headphones and sleep (P4)."*

*"I used to catch the teacher's attention because I was always talking in class and trying to disrupt the lesson (P7)."*

*"I got into an argument with the teacher of the English class, and pushed him (P9)."*

During the interviews, participants were often found to have made statements about absenteeism. In addition, when the students' confirmations were examined, it was observed that the number of days they were absent was high. These expressions are encoded with the label "Absenteeism". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"We would often run away from school and go to a cafe and sit with friends (P2)."*

*"I was using my right to absence to the fullest (P3)."*

*"When I was poisoned by a product I bought at the market, I had to be absent for a few days. Besides, sometimes I would run away from school (P5)."*

*"I would say I am going to school, and I would not go. My boyfriend and I used to meet and walk around, and we were sitting somewhere (P8)."*

During the interviews, participants were found to have acted antisocially and used statements that they had been referred to the school's disciplinary board. These statements are encoded under the label "Disciplinary Referrals". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"A friend of mine swore at me during class. The teacher did not intervene and continued to teach. So, I got angry. I had an argument with a friend and a teacher. I raised my voice to the teacher. I was sent to the disciplinary committee over this incident (P2)."*

*"The English teacher released us in class. Then he came and warned my brother harshly. So, I pushed the teacher, and my brother got involved. The teacher referred both me and my brother to the disciplinary committee (P9)."*

### **Findings on the Theme of Social Disadvantage**

Social disadvantage theme refers to environmental factors that have the potential to negatively affect the academic motivation of the student. The low economic situation of the family, working in a job, bad social environment, negative role models, peer group with negative behaviors and peer bullying codes were collected under the theme of "Social Disadvantage".

During the interviews, the families of the participants were found to have low socioeconomic status. These statements are encoded with the label "Bad Economic Situation". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"My father has been unemployed for about two months. He didn't make a lot of money when he worked. His monthly income would be around 700 Turkish Liras (TL) if things were good (P1)."*

*"My father used to run a cafe, but he doesn't work now. We didn't even get my school clothes (P5)."*

During the interviews, participants were found to have used statements that they were working in a job instead of going to school to contribute to their families' livelihoods. These expressions are encoded with the label "Working in a Job". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"When my family's economic situation was bad, I was working in a job to contribute to the livelihood of the house. I was earning 250 Turkish Lira per week (P1)."*

*"Since my father was not working at the moment, I was working for a car mechanic to support the house (P5)."*

*"I used to leave school and go to work in the industrial zone. I've been working since I was ten years old (P7)."*

In the interviews, it was observed that the participants used expressions that the individuals in the friend group had risky behaviors. These statements were coded with the label "Bad Peer Group". The statements of the participants regarding this code are as follows:

*"Most of the friends I hung out with at school were undisciplined. They would drive the teachers crazy (P1)."*

*"I can't say my circle of friends was very good. Some carried knives. They fought almost every day. I was following them (P2)."*

*"My friends would offer to run away from school and I would join them (P4)."*

*"My friend environment was not good. I was sleeping with my friends, whether at school or out of school (P7)."*

*"My friends smoked, their course achievements were low, some carried knives (P8)."*

*"My friends had nothing to do with class either. We used to run away together (P9)."*

In the interviews, the participants used statements that the individuals around them were effective on them when making the decision to leave the school. These expressions are encoded with the label "Negative Role Models". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"There are two brothers where I live. They're both college graduates and unemployed. So, when I saw them, I thought it was unnecessary to go to school (P6)."*

*"My bond with my sister was very strong. We were in the same class in elementary, middle and high school. When my sister dropped out of school, I dropped out about two weeks after that (P9)."*

In the interviews, it was observed that the participants used statements that where they resided of the school, they attended had a bad social environment. These phrases are encoded with the label "Bad Social Environment". The participants' statements regarding this code are as follows:

*"I didn't use substances, but I've had people advise me to use them. Where we were living was not very safe. I have a lot of neighbors and friends who use alcohol and drugs in our neighborhood (P4)."*

*"The school I attended was very bad. There were a lot of people who used substances and sold drugs (P5)."*

The study also found that, unlike other participants, a participant was subjected to peer bullying, which had a significant impact on his decision to leave school. These phrases are coded with the label "Peer Bullying". The participant's statements are as follows:

*"After school, the upper-class students would cut me off and ask for cigarettes. I was just saying I don't smoke. Then they said give me money. And when I resisted, they beat me."*

### **Discussion**

As a result of the analyses, it is seen that students drop out of school due to reasons such as low academic achievement, class repetition, absenteeism, poor economic situation, work, reluctance, lack of interest, negative behaviors, bad peer group, bad social environment, disciplinary referrals, peer bullying, different career orientations and negative role models. In the study, these reasons were classified as low academic motivation, risky behaviors and social disadvantage.

The results of this study show that high school students have common experiences in the dropout process of grade repetition, reluctance, low academic achievement, different career orientation and apathy. These codes were collected under the theme of low academic motivation. When the field is examined, it is seen that repeating the class increases the risk of school dropout (Jimerson et al., 2002). As previously emphasized, students' academic achievements are low (Fortin et al., 2013; Karacabey & Boyacı, 2018; Koçtürk et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2017) they lack perseverance, determination, attention, and have low academic motivation (Ottosen et al., 2017) increases the risk of school dropout. Arslan (2021) stated that individuals with high school engagement will show less dropout. The research results in the literature match the codes and themes we reached in our study. All this demonstrates the importance of monitoring students' academic achievements, whether they are repeating classes and attitudes towards lessons in order to prevent school dropouts.

The results of this study show that high school students have common experiences in the form of negative behavior, absenteeism and being referred to discipline during the drop-out process. These codes were collected under the theme of risky behavior. Students with a number of negative behaviors such as tobacco, alcohol or drug use, aggression, school avoidance and unsafe sexual intercourse, or deviation from social or legal norms are more likely to leave school (Ozer et al., 2011; Tabuchi et al., 2018). The results of these studies support the codes for negative behavior and discipline in our study. In addition, students with a high number of days not attending school may be in the risk of dropping out of school (Karacabey & Boyacı, 2018). As a matter of fact, Tabuchi et al. (2018) state that adolescents who are late for school for more than 10 days or who are absent are at high risk of leaving high school. Balfanz et al. (2007) reveal that 3/4 of the students who were absent for 30 days or more during an education period left school. These are the findings that support the absenteeism code obtained in the study. Previous studies and findings in this study suggest that identifying and engaging students with risky behaviors may have an important function in preventing the risk of school dropout.

The results of this study show that high school students have common experiences in the dropout process in the form of poor economic situation, employment, bad peer group, negative role models, bad social environment and peer bullying. These codes were collected under the theme of social disadvantage. The family's economic situation can have a significant impact on the drop-out risk (Karacabey & Boyacı, 2018; White & Kelly, 2010). So much so that students in underprivileged families are four times more likely to leave school than students with good finances (White & Kelly, 2010). So much so that the risk of dropping out of students in families with poor financial situations may be four times higher than students with a good financial situation (Montmarquette et al., 2007). Negative peer models play an important role in students leaving school (Boyacı & Öz, 2018). Özgü (2015) found that bullies and victims were at high risk of school rejection and school dropout. Zorbaz and Özer (2020) revealed that environmental safety and anti-social behavior are important factors for students to drop

out of school. The results of these studies support the codes covered under the theme of social disadvantage.

The results of the research present very important findings in terms of revealing this complex nature of school dropout behavior. The results show that school dropouts are caused by many factors and are caused by the interaction of many systems such as individual, family, school, peer group, environment. In this respect, the study is thought to make an important contribution to the field. Experimental studies aimed at preventing school dropouts in the literature are seen to be inadequate. The researchers' plans for experimental studies in later studies will make an important contribution to the field. When planning such a study, taking into account both the results of this study and the results of quantitative studies will ensure that the interventions to be made are effective.

In the study, the certificates or education documents of the participants were examined for triangulation. However, some of the documents belonging to some participants were not accessed or some information in the documents was found to be incomplete. This is the first of the limitations of the study. Another limitation of the study is that only two of the students interviewed were women. Considering this situation in future research can result in different or outlier themes. In addition, the use of only qualitative data in the study constitutes another limitation of the study. Using mixed design studies in which quantitative data is supported by qualitative data in future studies may eliminate this limitation.

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