

Article

The effect of students' experience with the transition from primary to secondary school on self-regulated learning and motivation

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Abstract: Transition from primary to secondary school is more successful when students' learning is consistent. Students are also more likely to enjoy the school, engage with learning, and have a high academic achievement in the secondary school when they feel motivated. This is a critical aspect especially in cases when global pandemics situations allow only the online schooling opportunity. Students that are away from school lack the traditional sources of motivation and self-regulated learning skills, thus research is needed to identify other important factors that can be developed in remote settings. The aim of this study was to find out how students perceive their experience with the transition from primary to secondary school and how such a transition influences students' self-regulated learning (SRL) and motivation. Self-reported data were collected during the COVID-19 breakout from a total of N=80, 6th and 7th grade students aged 12-14 years old. Results showed that students had a successful transition, especially when they are supported by their parents and teachers. Next, Bivariate Pearson Correlation analysis indicated that students' perceptions about their experience with the transition from primary to secondary school and their self-regulated learning and motivation are significantly correlated. No gender differences were found among all main study variables.

Keywords: motivation, self-regulated learning, transition, secondary school.

1. Introduction

Albania has a high Net Enrolment Rate of 96 per cent in primary education. With an education expenditure of 3 per cent of the GDP, Albania's education system is struggling to accomplish the goal of preparing students with 21st century skills, and to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4) and national education goals [1]. The Albanian pre-tertiary education system includes pre-school education, basic education (comprising primary and lower secondary education) and upper secondary education (often referred to as secondary education). Only basic education is compulsory which in 2012 increased from eight to nine years, a duration similar to the length of compulsory schooling found in OECD countries [1].

In 2016, Albania adopted the national Pre-University Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020, which set also the strategy priorities such as improving the governance, leadership and management capacities of pre-university education system resources [2]. However, Albanian education system still lacks the resources and infrastructure to provide quality education and equal

opportunities in traditional settings for all students comparable to the regional and European educational systems.

The recent world has been fortunate to offer educational opportunities in the traditional settings and rarely local challenges have been observed because of pandemic breakouts [3]. Unfortunately, the global COVID-19 breakout has forced the educators around the world to switch to unplanned remote educational settings [4,5]. This is a challenge for the educational institutional leadership, for the teachers and of course for the students as well [6–8]. One critical stage of education that deserves great attention is the transition from primary to secondary school especially during the schools' lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic [9]. It is well-established in the literature that the transition from primary to secondary school is an important step in educational life which is associated both with positive and negative effects with respect to the child's education and socio-emotional development [10]. As students struggle with adjustment, they also experience changes in social competence, learning environment, and learning needs [11]. This transition has been hindered more by the lockdown of the schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The difficulties for this group of students may stem both from the lack of technological resources such as a laptop or a cell phone and from the lack of self-regulated learning skills [12]. Non-optimal conditions, where the distance education is the major one, leads to high dropout rates and low academic performance [3]. At this stage, the identification of factors that can compensate for the inevitably difficult working conditions is essential.

The course pattern of students' SRL and motivation during school years is an area of interest across different contexts, especially as studies show that students' learning and motivation decline as they go through compulsory education [13,14]. Studies conducted in the field of educational psychology and in particular, in the school contexts have been mainly focused on how students' SRL process and motivation change during their middle school years [15]. Students' SRL and motivation are two important strongly correlated constructs, which are highly sensitive to their experiences with transition within an educational setting. These two overlapped components are often characterized by students' motivational beliefs, cognitive schemes, and metacognitive skills [16–18].

Scholars agree that students have the ability to regulate their learning and motivation which have a direct impact on students' ability to enjoy the school, engage with learning, and succeed academically [18]. However, students' experiences with transitions as they pass through compulsory education may interrupt their SRL process and motivation and put the child at risk to develop certain disruptive behaviors during both face to face and online learning. Teachers should find effective ways on how to match corresponding online teaching methods with students' learning needs in different subjects to better increase students' learning interest and creativity [19].

In Albania, a large number of students continue to leave school without mastering basic competencies such as self-regulated learning skills and motivation, which remain an issue especially among middle school students. Due to the differences among countries in terms of educational infrastructure and learning conditions, it has been very difficult for the Albanian educators to find evidence on how to adapt other models of SRL and motivation to the Albanian students' profile. Different teaching models have been developed to support students' learning, but still it is not clear

which self-regulated methods are effective and how they can help students stay motivated during their transition in the face of the pandemic. Studies have been very limited on investigating how students experience the transition to secondary school and how this shift may influence students' learning process during unusual times without face-to-face teacher guidance and institutional guidance and counselling [19]. With the spread of internet and associating development in technology e-learning has found common use in education [20]. This new trend started in higher education with the contribution of online educational platforms like Coursera, EDX etc [21,22]. Researchers have since then focused on how educational parameters like SRL and motivation [23] are modified in online settings. Barnard-Brak et al. (2010) identified different profiles of self-regulated learners in remote learning [24]. Patterns of SRL and motivation have been investigated with the former being more easily measurable as it can be extracted even from timely submission of compliance with students' periodic assignments [25]. All this body of research would be complemented with new data coming from the lockdown period as it affects all the students equally. During these unfortunate times, student population can be used as a testbed to better understand the educational patterns and outcomes. In this study we aim to investigate the experience with transition from elementary to secondary school and how it affects by SRL and motivation during a national lockdown. We want to add that such studies are hard to design as no one can predict the next lockdown and its time duration.

The focus of this article is on students' experiences with such a transition and its impact on their SRL and motivation during the pandemic. More specifically, this study aimed at investigating the following research questions: 1) How do students perceive the experience with transition from primary to secondary school during the pandemic? 2) Are there significant gender differences on the way how students experience the transition from primary to secondary school during the pandemic? 3) What is the relationship between students' experience with the transition and their self-regulated learning skills? 4) What is the relationship between students' experience with the transition and their motivation during the pandemic? This study adds value to the current literature at a global scale considering only the fact that this study is conducted at a latter time than the previous studies. The argument is stronger when we want to analyze gender-based differences. The expectations from women in the labor market have changed drastically for good as women are represented more in legislation, in management, and other areas. As the expectations for women have changed, this may reflect directly in their choice, persistence, and motivation. So, the data analyzed in this study provide a timely updated picture of the important variables for women. At the same time, this study was conducted during the global pandemic and provides a picture during a globally challenging situation. At a local scale, this study contributes in the understanding of important variables of students in Albania. A follow-up study after the lockdown, when students conduct face-to-face learning, employing the same research design would further contribute in understanding educational models. This study comes up with several recommendations about secondary schools on how to help students experience a positive transition to middle school and improve students' SRL skills and motivation especially during the pandemics.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Students' transition from primary to secondary school and SRL

SRL has received more recognition in the field of educational sciences over the last three decades. Researchers have come to the conclusion that there is no clear and precise definition of self-regulatory

capacity. As a construct, it includes different functions related to cognition, decision making, problem solving, conceptual change, metacognition, and motivation [26]. SRL is a learning process that is goal oriented, conscious, and individually controlled which includes skills such as trying to gain familiarity with a complex problem, learning a new language, studying for an exam, or learning how to play guitar [27]. SRL has been considered as a construct functioning as a mediator between individuals' self-regulatory skills and their own cognitive processes within their learning environment [28]. SRL is one aspect of self-regulation process which includes skills about planning the learning process, setting their own goals, learning strategies, and self-reinforcement. Current models of SRL explain the way students monitor their behaviors, choose goals, and select learning strategies.

There are different definitions of SRL but three elements seem to be important for students' academic performance. The first one includes metacognitive approaches used for developing and altering their cognition [29]. The second element consists of management tasks to keep students cognitively focused in the task leading to a better performance. The third element is related to the cognitive approaches that students use to comprehend the material [29]. A self-regulated learner is effective when the learner is able to manage the strategies to absorb and understand knowledge, analytically evaluate, and effectively use it to solve problems [30–32].

The Social Cognitive Theory developed by Bandura (1986) has been used as a conceptual framework because of the explanatory value to understand human development and application in children's learning. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory focuses on individuals' learning, improving, attainment of knowledge, and self-regulated skills within a social context, in which parents, peers, and teachers have an important role as social models toward children. Bandura (2006) describes his theory as "cognitive" not "behaviourist". He argues that people learn by observing others without being directly reinforced.

Bandura's theory was in itself a complete change from the behavioral perspective to a social-cognitive approach. Therefore, he developed a conceptual and analytical model called the Triadic Reciprocal Determinism (TRD) as shown in Figure 1. This model represents bidirectional relationships among an individual's behavior, personal factors, and the environment. In other words, it means that these three components are continually interacting with one another. Reciprocal determinism suggests that children play an active role within a learning environment. Their learning is not simply a process developed through learned associations or reinforcements but their own personal characteristics as well influence the way how they interact with the world.

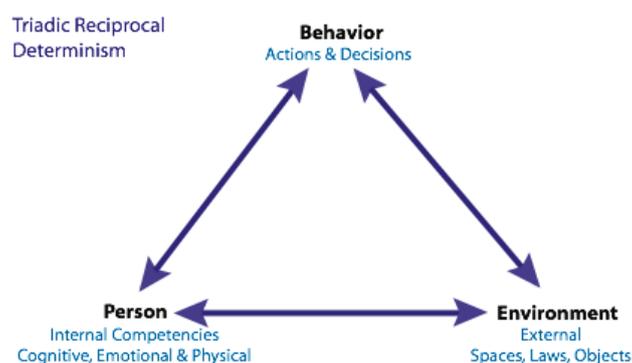


Figure 1. Triadic Reciprocal Determinism Model

Among many scholars such as Boekaerts (1995, 1996a, 1996b) [33–35], Borkowski and the colleagues (2000) [36], Winne & Hadwin (1998) and Zimmerman (1990a,b, 1998, 2000a) who have developed different SRL models of high quality supported by several empirical studies, Pintrich's model seems to be mostly influenced by the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (2000) [37–40]. Pintrich defined SRL as a goal-oriented process. He focused more on the constructive nature of SRL, which includes a range of factors consisting of cognitive, motivational, psychological, and social factors. Both Bokaerts and Pintrich focused their work mainly on motivation indicating that there exist significant relationships between motivational factors, SRL and academic performance [28].

From the social cognitive perspective, Zimmerman and the colleagues (1989) identified three important components of SRL [41]: 1) self-observation [42]; 2) self-judgment and 3) self-reactions. As the individual tries to reflect about the achievements and goals, and puts all the efforts to accomplish those; effectively, at this point the individual has become self-regulated. During the school years, teachers usually aim at developing and producing self-regulated learners by using different strategies and approaches such as Information Processing Model. As students store the information into long-term memory, they can retrieve it upon demand and apply to tasks, making them a self-regulated learner.

As shown in Figure 2., Zimmerman and the colleagues (1996) identified a self-regulatory learning cycle followed by four steps which can be implemented to enable students develop 5 crucial academic skills: (a) planning and study effectively, (b) comprehending and rolling up a text material, (c) developing note taking skills, (d) study and prepare for exams, and (e) writing more effectively. This model explains the strategies that should be followed to enable students to self-observe their current study practices more precisely, to identify which study methods are unproductive and instead, develop and implement other effective study strategies. In this respect, students need the social support and especially, teachers' support by providing opportunities to become more self-regulated and by monitoring students' learning to facilitate students' experience with the transition and help the child sustain the self-regulated learning process.



Figure 2. A model of self-regulated learning

Scholars claim that students who self-regulate their learning actively adjust their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as required to influence their learning practices and motivation [26]. According to literature, SRL during the transition from primary to secondary school is influenced by a range of factors. Students' experience in secondary school may be a result of a combination of these factors from previous experiences [43]. Children's actions are guided by adults. Through interactions with adults, children experience the transition of behaviors regulated by others to self-regulated ones.

This transformation of behaviors occurs when children start developing the capability to use their speech. Researchers have identified that other developmental changes that occur during the transition from primary to secondary school are characterized by an increase in the use of setting goals, planning, and study habits. Meece (2008) reported that children of younger age conceptualize studying as the act of going through the materials whereas older students engage in note-taking and underlining [44]. Also, younger children are not capable of following their comprehension [45]. Older children are able to define instabilities in the material and once they find them, they act by rereading to ensure that they read accurately [46]. As children grow older, they improve their regulatory activities including planning, goal setting, ensure comprehension, analyzing progress, and modifying strategies as necessary.

From teacher's perspective, being organized is the most challenging skill for students transitioning to middle school [47] especially during extraordinary times. Students can successfully move to the secondary school, as they become independent, develop organizational skills, and are able to self-regulate learning and be motivated to learn as they are supported by their teachers and parents. Coffey et al. (2013) report a completely unique case because they analyzed the immediate transition from elementary to secondary education of more than 100 schools, in a move to unify the educational system across all Australia [47]. Similar experiences in Australia has led the researchers to develop a pedagogical transition framework contributing to SRL by adapting several interrelated principles into the curriculum under normal educational conditions [48]. First, regarding transition, they propose that the curriculum should be developed to be stable and supporting students' transition from their previous learning experience to the kind of learning in secondary education. Second, the first-year educational program should be: i) student-centered, explicit and aiming at providing the foundation and framework necessary for first-year learning achievement, ii) evidence-based and improved by continuous evaluation that results in curriculum development, iii) accessible to students of all diversities and inclusive, iv) inclusive and enable active and collaborative learning including peer-to-peer collaboration and teacher-student interaction, v) facilitating towards students' transition. They provide several suggestions on how to implement the above aspects such providing grace period to help student develop confidence, placing students with children they already know etc. Especially, in online teaching activities, teachers should comprehend more deeply the discipline they cover, and adopt a variety of teaching methods to train students' thinking in subject learning, so that students' academic performance can be improved [19]. In the case of online learning environment, contributing to stronger students' SRL is essential and for this reason its assessment helps in the construction of supportive models. At the same time, it is reported that online learning directly supports SRL and a careful analysis of the sample analyzed here may shed more light in the model [49].

2.2 Students' transition from primary to secondary school and motivation

Students' motivation is considered as one of the most significant determinants of the learning experience at school [50]. Many studies explored the reasons why students make an effort and engage in learning [51]. The links between students' experiences with middle school transition and academic motivation and achievement during secondary school years are not well understood in the literature [52]. As students at this age become more self-conscious and involved with peers, their need for

autonomy increases as well and teachers find it more difficult to implement democratic and autonomy related classroom strategies that may influence students' learning practices. This gap created between students' needs and environmental factors negatively influences academic motivation and achievement [53,54]. These widely reported challenges can be overcome by the transition framework as it offers several suggestions that lead to a more familiar environment by associating students in the education stage with their friends that they had in the past, by creating a student centered system and by training teachers on how to pass the transition stage.

This field of research has been mainly dominated by the self-determination theory (STD) over the last four decades [55,56] which has been used as a conceptual framework to understand the role of motivation on students' learning. This is a macro-theory of human motivation, which has been in the focus of various contexts. STD argues that the type of motivation driving a certain behaviour can have a high impact on physiological and psychological functioning. Deci & Ryan (1991, 1995) have identified three general types of motivation: intrinsic motivation; extrinsic motivation; and amotivation [55,56]. Intrinsic motivation, which is also considered as a self-determined type of motivation, includes participation in activities for different reasons such as for pleasure, learning, or task completion. Extrinsic motivation drives behaviours, which are displayed mainly because they lead to positive outcomes. Lastly, amotivation is the absence of motivation defined as the lack of desire, intention or ability [57].

Other scholars such as Pintrich and De Groot (1990) tried to conceptualize student motivation by adopting an expectancy value model of motivation categorized into three motivational components: i) "expectancy" component which consists of students' beliefs to complete a task; ii) "value" component which includes students' goals and beliefs related to the importance and interest of the task; and iii) "affective" component, which is about students' emotional responses to the task [58]. There exist various goals that motivate students during their years of schooling [59]. The trichotomous model conceptualized by Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) differentiated between three kinds of goals: mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals. Students oriented towards mastery-approach goals aim at developing different skills and mastery and are confident of being able to do so [60]. Students with a performance goal orientation strive at demonstrating competence by achieving high grades and superiority over peers. The aim is to demonstrate their ability in comparison to the others to show them what they have achieved. Lastly, students with a performance-avoidance orientation try to positively influence the others: they do not want to perform worse than others [61]. Studies show that students oriented mostly towards mastery goals are more motivated and self-regulated than those with performance goals [62–65].

A review of the literature indicates that moving to a new and larger learning environment greatly influences students' learning practices and motivation [52]. This shift of the students to an upper level of education is associated with a number of social, educational, and developmental issues such as disruptions of social networks; less individual attention from teachers; 'forcing the limits' as an attempt to adjust to a new learning environment; weakening the student's self-concept and capability to cope well; less motivating teacher methodology leading to students' diminished interest and engagement; and peer pressure resulting in running away from classes, low academic performance, and engaging in risk behaviors [66,67]. As such, students have to reconstruct their identities, including their self-efficacy, self-esteem, social competence and academic standing within a mixed network of new peers and multiple teachers in circling class sessions [68].

Different studies point out at a range of factors that may influence students' motivation during transition to secondary school [69–73]. The social-environmental factors seem to have an impact especially on students' intrinsic motivation including the motivational climate, classmates, teaching practices, learning materials, and adult support [72]. Classroom experiences may have an effect on motivation because as students view the classroom environment positively and they have positive perceptions of progress and competence [74], they are more likely to feel both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated and have a sense of belonging [71]. As children grow older, especially, their intrinsic motivation plays an important role in shaping their perceptions about learning development and beliefs about their capabilities [75]. Harter, Whitesell and Kowalski (1992) suggested that changes in structures and sizes of school may contribute to motivation and academic performance [76]. Particularly, they proposed that environmental changes force students to embrace a more extrinsic orientation towards schoolwork, linking to more objective self-evaluations. An influential factor that may facilitate students' transition are the teachers considered as the driving force that help students stay motivated at school [77,78]. Influential teachers plan a goal-oriented class session, create an attractive and encouraging learning environment, provide clear and consistent tutoring, and support students with learning cues [59].

2.3 Effect of gender on students' transition from primary to secondary school, SRL and motivation

Researchers have always focused on the gender effect on several variables related to educational domain. Eventhough the common perceptions propose a gender difference, results obtained from studies carried out over at least five decades provide mixed conclusions. One should compare the results of similar studies conducted at different timeframes as the world has been changing drastically. The demographic changes, the decrease of fertility has led developed countries to take several measures to facilitate a better balance between work and family [79]. As a result of the measures taken, an increase of participation of women in legislation [80], in management [81], in IT workforce [82], and other areas [83] is observed. This change of expectations from women should reflect also on the factors that are related to education during all the stages. In a detailed meta-analysis, it was reported that even if gender-based differences in some educational domain ever existed, it is not present any more [84]. For a more comprehensive review on the effect of gender we refer to references [85–87]. There is a difference between the achievement and the gender based choices and effort. The underrepresentation of women in certain areas indicates a difference in choice. Pintrich and Zuscho (2002) report that there is a difference between genders in effort, choice and persistence [85]. In line with this result, one could expect a difference in SRL and motivation. We compare the scores between the genders for the three variables that we have analyzed and report the results in section 4.

3. Method

3.1. Participants, Sampling and Procedure

A convenience sample of N = 80 students (47 females, 58.8% and 33 males, 41.2%) aged 12-14 years (Mean=12.23, SD=0.86) old who attended 6th and 7th grades in different schools of Tirana city and who reported about their experience with the transition from primary to secondary school during

the pandemic was included in this study. The participants were recruited by using the convenience sampling which is a type of non-probability sampling technique. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to middle school students via google forms to obtain information about their self-regulated learning, motivation and experience with the transition from primary to secondary school. The return rate was 67%. Participants were informed about the aim of the study and where these data was to be used. They were assured about the anonymity and confidentiality of the data.

3.2. Measurement tool

The questionnaire used for the purpose of this study consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of questions about demographic information. The second part included a set of questions used to measure student's experience with the transition from primary to secondary school, their motivation, and self-regulated learning skills. The items of the survey were on a Likert type scale (from 1=" *Strongly Disagree*" to 5=" *Strongly Agree*") used to measure the main variables of this study [17].

3.3. Measures

Experience with transition. This scale included 6 items measured by using questions like '*I feel capable of handling my transition to college successfully.*' Or '*There are aspects of my new situation that I can control*' [88]. The items measuring this variable were on a Likert type scale (from 1=" *Strongly Agree*" to 5=" *Strongly Disagree*"). Reliability analysis showed an $\alpha = .78$.

Self-regulated learning. To measure this study variable, 25 items were used including questions like '*When I study for a test, I try to put together the information from class and from the book*' or '*When I do homework, I try to remember what the teacher said in class so, I can answer the questions correctly.*' [58]. A Likert type scale was used for the items of this scale (from 1=" *Strongly Agree*" to 5=" *Strongly Disagree*"). Reliability analysis revealed an $\alpha = .93$.

Motivation. Motivation scale consisted of 18 items where students reported about their motivation by asking questions like '*I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for this class.*' or '*I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things*' [88]. The items measuring motivation were on a Likert type scale (from 1=" *Strongly Agree*" to 5=" *Strongly Disagree*"). Reliability analysis indicated that $\alpha = .93$.

Factor analysis was run to validate the data. To find support for the construct validity of the three measures, an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to assess the underlying structure for the 49 items of Self-Regulated Learning and Motivation Questionnaire. Three factors were requested referring to the fact that the items were designed to index three constructs: experience with transition, self-regulated learning, and motivation. After rotation, the first factor accounted for 18.66% of the variance, the second factor accounted for 17.4% of the variance, and the third factor accounted for 8.9%. The first factor, which seems to index self-regulated learning, had strong loadings (.40-.76) on the first 25 items. The second factor, which seemed to index motivation, had high loadings (.43-.78) on the next 18 items. The third factor, which seemed to index experience with transition, loaded highly (.39-.64) on the last 6 items. Finally, the analysis showed that the data do fit into the three constructs, giving us support for the construct validity of the three measures in this sample.

3.4. Data analysis

The data were analyzed by using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The Reliability Statistics was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of all the items of each scale of the study variables by providing the Cronbach's Alpha as a measure of reliability. Then, exploratory factor analysis has been conducted to indicate construct validity of the questionnaire used for the aim of this study. Next, frequency distributions and descriptive analysis were used to analyze students' self-regulated learning, motivation, and perceived experience with the transition from primary to secondary school. Then, an Independent Samples *T*-test analysis was conducted to investigate whether there are gender differences on students' experiences with the transition to secondary school, self-regulated learning skills, and motivation. Finally, Bivariate Pearson Correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationship between self-regulated learning, motivation and the experience with the transition to secondary school.

4. Results

As shown in Table 1, descriptive analysis revealed the means, Standard Deviations, range, skewness and kurtosis for all variables of interest in this study. To investigate how student perceives the experience with the transition, self-regulated learning and motivation, descriptive analysis was conducted which showed that experience with transition scale has a mean of 3.61 with a standard deviation .71, self-regulated learning scale has a mean of 3.67 with a standard deviation .59, and motivation scale has a mean of 3.70 with a standard deviation .64. The results showed that students have reported an over average experience with the three scales.

Table 1 Student's perceived experience with transition from primary to secondary school, N=80.

Variable	<i>M (sd)</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Students' Experience with Transition	3.61 (.71)	1-5	-0.24	0.25		
2. Students' Self-regulated Learning	3.67 (.59)	1-5	-0.44	.59		
3. Students' Motivation	3.70 (.64)	1-5	-0.65	0.12		
4. Gender						
Male					33	41.2
Female					47	58.8

Note. m = mean; sd = standard deviation

Next, as indicated in Table 2, the Independent Samples *T*-test analysis showed that males did not significantly differ from females on their experience with the transition from primary to secondary school ($p=.78$), self-regulated learning skills ($p=.46$), and motivation ($p=.81$). Thus, there are no significant gender differences on students' experience with the transition, self-regulated learning, and motivation.

Table 2 Comparison of male and female middle school students on experience with the transition from primary to secondary school, self-regulated learning skills, and motivation (n= 33 males and 47 females)

Variable	<i>M(sd)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Experience with transition		0.29	0.78
Males	3.64(.79)		
Females	3.59(.65)		
Self-regulated learning		-0.75	0.46
Males	3.61(.65)		
Females	3.71(.54)		
Motivation		-0.24	0.81
Males	3.68(.66)		
Females	3.72(.64)		

Then, as indicated in Table 3, Bivariate Pearson Correlation analysis showed that there is a significant positive correlation between students' experience with the transition and their self-regulated learning skills, $r(80) = .45$, $p < .001$, which is considered a large effect size according to Cohen (1988).

Table 3 Intercorrelations for the main variables of the study (n= 80)

Variable	1	2
1. Experience with transition	..	0.45*
2. Self-regulated learning

* $p < .001$

Next, as reported in Table 4, Bivariate Pearson Correlation analysis revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between students' experience with the transition and their motivation, $r(80) = .45$, $p < .001$, which is considered a large effect size.

Table 4 Intercorrelations for the main variables of the study (n= 80)

Variable	1	2
1. Experience with transition	..	0.45*
2. Students' motivation

* $p < .001$

Finally, as reported in Table 5, Bivariate Pearson Correlation analysis showed that there is a significant positive correlation between students' self-regulated learning and their motivation, $r(80) = .59$, $p < .001$, which is considered a large effect size.

Table 5 Intercorrelations for the main variables of the study (n= 80)

Variable	1	2
1. Self-regulated learning	..	0.59*
2. Students' motivation

* $p < .001$

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This work explored the recent literature regarding students' experience with the transition from primary to secondary school and how this has influenced their self-regulation learning skills and motivation. The analysis of these two factors in different countries with unique educational models is important for online schooling in general as it facilitates comparisons among various samples and is inevitable in the unfortunate global pandemic situations like the COVID-19. The success rate of the transition to the secondary school may result to be lower in the new normal conditions as a result of lower level of self-management and motivation [89]. Although children have a low risk of COVID-19, their personal characteristics are directly and indirectly harmed by the extensive precautions [90]. Moreover, there was evidence that during the transition, rates of students' motivation, school engagement, and attitudes were more likely to decline while the rates of absence and dropping out were more likely to increase.

The findings of this study showed that students could handle the transition from primary to secondary school at a moderate level. Transition experiences shape students' emotional reactions to stressful situations, and such processes prepare the motivational grounds for their involvement, burnout, and accomplishments at school [91]. Transition to educational settings characterized by greater discipline and control and reduced quality of teacher-student relationships can hinder students' academic engagement and evoke behavioral problems and school-related fears. The positive experience with transition was found to have no gender effect. Other studies similarly reported no gender differences among students' experiences with transition to secondary school [67]. Next, students believed that teachers, parents, older brothers, sisters, or friends are important sources of information who may facilitate students' transition process. This finding is supported by previous studies which show that students' perceptions of social support provided especially by older siblings [47], parents and teachers positively influence students' transition to secondary school [77,78,92,93].

The results also showed a positive significant relationship between students' experience with the transition and their motivation and SRL. These findings are supported by the literature which indicates that these variables are positively correlated and the way students experience a certain transition affects their cognitive engagement and academic motivation and performance [58,89,94]. Similar to experience with transition, no gender difference was observed for SRL and motivation in this study. This result is in line with most of the research in the literature. Pintrich and de Groot (1990) found no gender difference on motivational and SRL components of classroom academic performance for seventh graders [58]. There are studies that have concluded a gender difference with

women reporting higher levels of effort and persistence [85] and this could lead to a hypothesis that women have higher motivation, but this was not confirmed.

Teachers can foster students' SRL skills by implementing effective teaching methods and by following the proposed pedagogical transition framework. This framework aims to create a familiar and student friendly environment and as a result it would strengthen the students' cognitive skills. SRL and motivation are directly related with both the managing capacity of transition from one educational stage to another in general and the managing capacity of online learning. Considering that SRL is a more obvious variable and more easily quantifiable by the parents and teachers, the latter should receive proper training on how: i) to guide students to carry out self-regulated learning, and ii) to choose self-regulated learning materials and methods for students [19]. Huon et al. (2007) reported that student controlled SRL methods often results in shallow information processing strategies [95]. A teacher controlled studying model will ensure that the students acquire both the breadth and depth of the material offered in school.

6. Limitations and implications for future research

A few limitations and some implications for future research should be noted. This study is focused on two important constructs, which are greatly influenced by students' experiences with transition. It should be noted that other measures such as self-efficacy beliefs, social relatedness or self-esteem can be included in order to determine the broader range of factors that influence motivational beliefs, students' regulatory skills and achievement.

Due to the intensive period of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown of the schools, we were limited to collecting the data online and reaching a limited number of respondents through a random sampling procedure. Future studies may consider a more diverse sample in terms of school reputation, student quality and school location (e.g. urban vs. rural).

A final limitation of this study is the reliance only on student self-reported information about their experiences with transition and other variables of interest. This way of assessment may lead to inconsistent or inaccurate information due to inability to remember experiences happening earlier in time or it is possible that successful students are more willing to provide a positive profile of experiences, beliefs and behaviors. Future research can further examine these processes by considering data collection from other sources (e.g., teachers and parents) and other forms of assessment, including observations and structured interviews with focus groups.

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