

ÖĞRENCİLERİN SOSYAL BİLGİLER SEVGİSİ

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ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı, öğrencilerin sosyal bilgiler dersiyle ilgili tutumlarının nedenlerini belirlemektir. Araştırma, Elazığ merkezde yer alan beş ortaokulda öğrenim gören 100 öğrenci üzerinde yapılmıştır. Araştırmada, nitel araştırma desenlerinden olan durum çalışması (case study) kullanılmıştır. Bu araştırmada amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden biri olan, kolay ulaşılabilir durum örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Verilerin çözümlenmesinde betimsel analiz tekniği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre öğrencilerin sosyal bilgiler dersini sevmeye nedenleri; öğretmenlerini sevmeleri, farklı konularla ilgili bilgi edinme istekleri, derslerin eğlenceli geçmesi, tarih konularını sevmeleri ve sosyal bilgiler dersini, hayatta kullanılabilecek bilgiler sunması yönüyle sevmektedirler. Öğrencilerin sosyal bilgiler dersini sevmeme nedenleri ise, konuların zor ve sıkıcı olması, öğretmenin konuyu sunma şeklini beğenmeme, öğretmenin davranışlarını beğenmeme ve sınavların kötü geçmesi şeklinde sıralanmıştır. Öğrencilerin sosyal bilgiler dersini sevmeye konusundaki kararsızlık nedenleri ise, bazı konuların ilgi alanlarına girmemesi, konuları anlamakta zorlanma, derslerin sıkıcı geçmesi şeklinde sıralanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Bilgiler, tutum, yapılandırmacı yaklaşım

LOVE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES AMONG STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to determine the reasons behind the student attitudes towards the social studies course. The study was conducted with 100 students attending five middle schools in Elazığ province urban center. The case study method, a qualitative research design, was employed in the study. The sample was assigned with convenience sampling, a purposive sampling method. The study data were analyzed with the descriptive analysis technique. The study findings demonstrated that the students loved the social studies course due to their love for the teacher, their desire to be knowledgeable on various topics, the social studies course was fun, their love for historical topics, and the fact that social studies course provided knowledge that could be used in life. The reasons of the students who disliked the social studies course included the fact that they considered the course difficult and boring, they disliked the instruction method, teacher behavior, and they scored badly in the exams. Certain students were indecisive since they were not interested in certain course topics, experienced problems in comprehension of the content, and considered the course boring.

Keywords: Social studies, attitude, constructivist approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social studies is expected to be a course loved by the students since the course content is about life and it was based the constructivist, in other words, student-centered approach since 2005. However, students may also exhibit negative attitudes towards the course due to lack of school facilities, and reasons associated with teachers and students.

The social studies curriculum aims the acquisition of democratic values and skills. Thus, it aims to train citizens with scientific reasoning skills based on knowledge, who possess knowledge on local values and respect universal values. The social studies course aims to train

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creative citizens who can criticize social values and establish new values, but not citizens who do not question the social order and obey (Kabapınar, 2014: 3).

For this purpose, student-centered methods were adopted in the social studies curriculum developed based on the constructivist approach. The curriculum aims to raise national and historical awareness among the students and instruction of the topics with different perspectives by the teachers. This depends on the strategy, method and technique employed by teachers (Aydın, 2016: 24).

In Turkey, several studies demonstrated that the constructivist approach improved student achievements. Ayaz and Şekerci (2015) conducted a meta-analysis to determine the impact of constructivist approach on student attitudes and achievements. They reviewed international and national theses and papers published in various fields between 2003 and 2014. They determined that the constructivist approach had a strong effect on the academic achievements of the students and a moderate positive effect on their attitudes when compared to traditional instruction methods.

A study conducted by Şan and İbrahimoglu (2017) aimed to determine the impact of student-centered activities on the academic success of the students in social studies course and student views on these activities. The study findings revealed that the activities had positive effects on the academic achievement of the students and led to positive attitudes towards the activities among the students.

In contrast with the above-mentioned study findings, Yılmaz and Tepebaş (2011) analyzed the social studies curriculum based on the views of novice social studies teachers. The study findings revealed that teachers experienced problems due to the conditions, and inadequate facilities at the school, and certain negative administrator, teacher, student and parent behavior and attitudes.

In the study conducted by Oflar (2018), the expectations of social studies teachers from classroom teachers to instruct the 4th grade learning areas were examined. Expectations such as paying attention to instruction methods and techniques, training individuals who could question and demand their rights and acquire reading habits were determined.

Tetik and Arslan (2013) conducted a study with 389 primary education 5th grade students attending five schools in Zonguldak province. The study findings demonstrated that students failed in most achievements.

Yener (2014) conducted a study to determine the views of social studies teachers on the problems they encountered in social studies instruction. Yener interviewed 22 social studies teachers in Muş province. The analysis results revealed several problems. There were problems associated with the students, teachers, secondary education placement exam, methodology and techniques, curriculum and other factors in social studies instruction.

The study conducted by Karaca (2017) aimed to determine the problems experienced by teachers employed in Çorum urban center in social studies instruction. It was determined that the students had positive attitudes towards the social studies course and the teacher. Due to the intensive social studies curriculum and insufficient course hours, the students failed to acquire the required values and skills, and they could not internalize the topics because they considered the topics should be learned by memorizing. Teachers could not finalize the curriculum since they had to instruct the course for the TEOG exam; and therefore, they could not implement the student-centered approach. Furthermore, they stated that the lack of equipment and social studies classrooms at schools provided a limited educational environment.

Yıldırım (2019) aimed to reveal the status of the implementation of active learning methods and associated problems. Most teachers stated that they employed active learning methods. Furthermore, they stated that they experienced problems in active learning methods due to insufficient weekly course hours and the fact that 8th graders were concentrated on getting ready for the secondary education placement exams.

The study conducted by Çelikkaya and Kürümlüoğlu (2018) aimed to determine the views of the teachers on the revised social studies curriculum. Most teachers who received in-service training stated that the training was insufficient, the training should be based on practice and instructed by academicians and in less-crowded classes. Teachers stated that they experienced difficulties due to insufficient course hours, intense and inadequate for the student level, and inadequate textbooks.

Öztürk and Kafadar (2020) conducted a research to analyze the social studies course curriculum, adopted in 2018. It was determined that the social studies curriculum did not have a unique perspective and purpose. The values and skills were not instructed as a separate course or topic but integrated with all courses. There were no instructions about the measurement and evaluation methods and techniques in the curriculum.

The studies mentioned above were quite different from the traditional approach and the 2005 curriculum based on constructivist approach, and 2018 revision based on the student-centered constructivist approach that aims active students. However, the studies were interpreted above based on positive and negative aspects. Based on these studies, the present study aimed to determine the attitudes of students towards the social studies course.

2. METHOD

2.1 The Research Design

The case study method, a qualitative research design, was employed in the present study. Thus, students' love for social studies was demonstrated in detail. The main feature of a qualitative case study is the in-depth investigation of one or a few cases. In other words, case study investigates factors associated with a case with a holistic approach. The focus is on how they affect the relevant case and how they are affected by that case (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005: 77).

This sampling method allows a rapid and practical study. Because in this method, the researcher selects a nearby and easy to access case. Convenience sampling is often used when the researcher could not employ other sampling methods (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005: 113).

2.2 Participants

The study was conducted in Elazığ. In the study, convenience sampling, a purposive sampling method, was used to assign the study group members based on the fact that the schools where the study was conducted were at the urban center and easily accessible. The study group included 100 5th, 6th, and 7th grade middle school students. Provincial directorate of national education approval was obtained to conduct the study in Elazığ, Gazi, İstiklal, Mezre, and Dumlupınar Secondary Schools. This study group included only volunteer students. The study group demographics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant demographics

Student demographics		f
Gender	Female	52
	Male	48
Total		100

As seen in Table 1, 52 participating students were female and 48 were male. Other participant demographics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Participant demographics

		f
School	Elazığ Middle School	22
	Gazi Middle School	14
	İstiklal Middle School	20
	Mezre Middle School	32
	Dumlupınar Middle School	12
Grade	5	36
	6	32
	7	32
Total		100

As seen in Table 2, 22 participating students attended Elazığ Middle School, 14 attended Gazi Middle School, 20 attended İstiklal Middle School, 32 attended Mezre Middle School and 12 attended Dumlupınar Middle School. Thirty-six students were in 5th grade, 32 were in 6th grade and 32 were in 7th grade.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

The present study aimed to determine the reasons why students liked the social studies course, the reasons why they did not like the social studies course, and the indecision of the students about the course. For this purpose, the case study, a qualitative research design, was employed to determine the experiences of the students in the social studies course. Data were collected with a semi-structured interview form. The interview questions were developed with assistance from two experts. The developed form was applied to 6 students to determine whether it was comprehensible. The form was finalized after a revision. The study aimed to determine whether the students liked the social studies course. For this purpose, the following questions were asked to the participants, and they were required to choose an answer that best suits their perception and explain their answer.

1. I like the social studies course, because....
2. I do not like the social studies course, because ...
3. I cannot decide, because...

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were collected with a semi-structured interview form and analyzed with the descriptive analysis technique. The data collected with this approach are summarized and interpreted based on predetermined themes. The data could be organized based on the themes obtained based on the research problems, or they could be presented based on the questions or dimensions employed in the interviews and observations (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005: 224).

The data were read by the author and another expert researcher to determine the important topics. The topics were combined to determine the themes. In the study, the volunteering students were determined, and the semi-structured interview forms were distributed. The collected data are presented to the reader under certain topics and themes. The comparison was calculated with the agreement / agreement + disagreement X 100 reliability formula. Thus, the reliability coefficient was determined as 98%. All study data are stored by the author for future inspection if necessary.

3. FINDINGS

The findings associated with each sub-problem are presented below:

3.1 The reasons for liking the social studies course;

The reasons for liking the social studies course based on student views are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The reasons for liking the social studies course based on student views

Student view	f
We love the teacher; (s)he instructs well	26
We learn information in diverse topics	25
The class is fun	22
I like historical topics	22
In social studies, I learn information that I can use in life	10

As seen in Table 3, the reasons for the students to like the social studies course included their love for their teachers and their instruction style, the fact that they learn about various topics and have fun in the class, they liked historical topics and the course provided information that could be used in life. Certain student views are presented below based on the semi-structured interview form number (S):

S25. “The teacher instructs the course very well and the classes are comprehensible. I comprehend the instruction and that is why I love it very much.”

S94. “I comprehend the instruction very well. I really want to learn these topics and the class is fun.”

S46. “I comprehend the instruction very well in the social studies course, I can easily ask questions. I feel better in social studies class. This lesson is close to me. That is why I love the social course.”

S47. "Teacher T contributed a lot to my love of the social course. Because (s)he instructs the course very well, with a little fun. (S)he made us love the social course. In short, I liked the course thanks to the teacher."

In general, student satisfaction with the social studies course was due to acquisition of knowledge that could be used in life, due to the teacher and the topic.

3.2 The reasons for disliking the social studies course;

The reasons for disliking the social studies course based on student views are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The reasons for disliking the social studies course based on student views

Student view	f
The topics are difficult and boring	13
I do not like the instruction style of the teacher	5
I do not like the behavior of the teacher	4
I get poor grades	2

As seen in Table 4, the students explained the reasons for their dislike about the social studies course by stating that the subjects were difficult and boring, they dislikes the teacher's instruction style or behavior, and they got poor grades.

S12. "I hate the social studies course. I do not understand several topics. There are also very difficult topics. I make several mistakes in the exams, so I do not like the social studies course."

S15. "Social studies course is boring. The teacher's instruction is boring. There is no fun, we are bored. I do not like the social course."

S29. "It is very boring. The instruction is always based on the book."

S38. "... As soon as the teacher arrives, (s)he turns the smart board on. (S)he does not even say good morning. (S)he does not talk to us at all; immediately tells us to write."

S59. "I find it difficult to remember the details of this course. I also think that the classes are boring. It is boring for me to discuss similar battles over and over again every year. And I think there are too many topics. Studying so many subjects is difficult for me."

S68. "Social course is entirely rote-based. I hate memorizing and historical events. Social exams are always classic. I do not like the social course as I do not understand it at all. There should be easy and uncomplicated information."

S90. "Our social studies teacher's instruction is boring and, in my opinion, bad. And time does not pass in the class, we get sleepy."

Students generally do not like the social studies course due to topical and teacher-based reasons.

3.3 The indecision of the students about their perceptions on the social studies course

The indecision of the students about their perceptions on the social studies course are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The indecision of the students about their perceptions on the social studies course

Student view	f
Certain topics interest me, others do not	9
I experience problems in understanding the topics	5
The classes are boring	3
I do not like the teacher	3
I do not like it because the exams are difficult	2

As seen in Table 5, about the reasons for their indecision about enjoying the social studies course, the students stated that they were not interested in certain topics, experienced difficulties in understanding the topics, the classes were boring, they disliked the teacher, and the exams were difficult.

S6. "There are things that I like or dislike in the social studies course. I like learning information about Turkey and the regions. I do not like the difficulties I experience in the tests."

S16. "When I take a test in the social studies course and our teacher instructs the topic, I enjoy the class sincerely and happily But I do not like it because I experience difficulties in the test and I make more mistakes than other courses."

S33. "I love the course when our teacher instructs well. But I do not like the course when the teacher does not. Therefore, I am indecisive."

S97. "I like and comprehend the social studies course, but when I miss some classes or when I do not understand, I get bored."

S82. "The social studies course needs to be enlivened a little. Also, I cannot remember the chronologies in the social studies course. But I love the teacher very much."

S85. "Aspects I like: I become an active individual. I become a social citizen. The classes are fun. Aspects I do not like: The dates are complicated. Exams is difficult, confusing, so I am indecisive."

In general, students are indecisive about whether they like the social studies course due to reasons associated with the teacher, topics and exams.

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine the reasons for student attitudes towards the social studies course. In the study, the students stated that they liked the social studies course since they loved their teachers, they wanted to learn about different topics, the classes were fun, they liked historical topics, and the social studies course provided information that could be used in life. The present study findings consistent with the reports by Aktepe, Tahiroğlu and Sargın (2014), Özkal, Güngör and Çetingöz (2004).

Aktepe, Tahiroğlu, and Sargın (2014) reported that students generally had a positive attitude towards the social studies course. However, their negative attitudes were due to the boredom they felt in the social studies course, and they stated that the time did not pass in the course, they did not like to study for the course, and they were scared of the social studies course and exams.

Based on the findings of the study by Özkal, Güngör and Çetingöz (2004), students had positive attitudes towards the social studies course, while female students and students attending public schools exhibited higher positive attitudes. It was concluded that the teachers generally had positive attitudes and there was no difference based on gender. It was determined that teachers with 1-10 years of seniority had more negative attitudes.

In the present study, the students who did not like the social studies course stated that the topics were difficult and boring, they did not like the way the teacher instructed the topics, they disliked the teacher's behavior, and they got poor grades in the exams. Certain students were indecisive about whether they liked the course and stated that certain topics did not interest them, they experienced difficulties in understanding the topics, and the classes were boring. The present study findings were consistent with those reported by Dikbaş, Hasırcı (2008), Tangülü and Çıdaçı (2014), Özel (2014), Çelikkaya and Kuş (2009), Kuş and Çelikkaya (2010), Kaymakçı and Akbaba (2014), Ayaydın (2014), and Kartal (2018).

In a study conducted by Dikbaş, Hasırcı (2008), it was reported that the instruction of learning strategies in social studies course improved achievements and contributed to the attitudes towards the course. The aim of the study conducted by Tangülü and Çıdaçı (2014) was to determine the problems experienced by branch teachers in primary school 5th grade. The findings revealed that teachers experienced several problems in the education and instruction environment associated with student readiness for class, classroom management, counseling, assessment and evaluation, learning and teaching processes.

Özel (2014) reported that senior teachers employed technological tools more in the instruction of social studies course history topics, most teachers believed that the use of technological means improved the efficacy in instruction, but their employment of technological tools was not equal. On the other hand, Çelikkaya and Kuş (2009) determined that there were certain problems in the employment of methods and techniques by social studies teachers, and they mostly employed conventional methods and techniques such as direct instruction and question and answer.

Eryılmaz (2015) reported that there was a difference between the sensitivity to social problem scale scores of the experimental group students who were instructed with current events in the social studies course and the control group. Kuş and Çelikkaya (2010) determined that social studies teachers expected the students to study regularly, the parents to have interest in the students, the administrators to support them and provide an adequate learning environment. The teachers stated that they required in-service training on various methods and material; however, their requirements were not met.

A study conducted by Kaymakçı and Akbaba (2014) aimed to determine the topics that pre-service social studies teachers could not learn in the past and solutions to this problem. In the study, pre-service teachers stated that they could not learn most topics instructed in the social studies course. This was due to teacher attitudes, inability of the teachers to use materials in the class, the course content, and lack of knowledge in mathematics. They suggested the employment of material such as technological tools, course presentations, visuals, worksheets, and timelines to solve these problems.

Based on the findings of the study conducted by Ayaydın (2014), in-service and pre-service social studies teachers stated that they employed instructional technologies for the acquisition of target behavior, comprehension of the topics, resolving the consequences of individual differences, to make the instruction fun, visualization, to ensure class participation, to raise interest, to save time, and to increase student motivation. However, teachers also stated that instructional technologies lead to difficulties in classroom management, technical problems, high cost, deterioration of teacher-student relationship, take longer to develop and employ, increase student and teacher laziness, reduce socialization, do not serve to all intelligence areas, and reduce students' reading habits.

Kartal (2018) aimed to investigate the attitudes of pre-service social studies teachers towards technology based on various variables. The study findings demonstrated that personally innovative pre-service social studies teachers had positive attitudes towards technology, their attitudes towards technology differed based on seniority, and senior students exhibited more positive attitudes when compared to freshmen.

Student failure is associated with motivation. Low motivation leads to indifference towards the course or failure. The strategies that could be used to motivate students in the classroom include the following: 1) Activities should be organized based on student interests. 2) The topic could be associated with the students' objectives, and they could be motivated further when they think they could fulfill personal needs. 3) Students will be more motivated when they expect achievement. 4) Class should be interesting. 5) The teacher could provide a model to improve the desire to learn the topic. 6) Successful students should be rewarded. 7) A supportive environment should be available for the students (Erdem, 2016: 118-119).

The following could be recommended based on the study findings:

1. Students' love for their teacher promotes positive attitudes towards the course. Thus, in-service training on communication and body language should be available for the teachers.
2. Current issues should be emphasized in the curriculum. The student interest in social studies would improve when the latter is a part of life.
3. Methods and techniques that would lead to a more entertaining instruction should be prioritized.
4. Technological tools and equipment should be employed in the class.
5. The textbooks should not include too much information and rote-based learning should be avoided.

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