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INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO SOCIAL STUDIES COURSE AND SOCIAL SKILLS LEVELS*

Research article

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the attitudes of secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels. This research is a descriptive study in relational survey model. Quantitative research method was used in this study. The study group of the research consists of 210 secondary school students studying at the level (5.6.7. grades) in the 2021-2022 academic year. Convenience sampling method was used in the study. In the research, the Attitude Scale Towards Social Studies Lesson developed by Uzun (2006) and the "Social Skills Scale" developed by Yurdakavuştu (2012) were used as data collection tools. When the research findings are evaluated; A moderate positive correlation was found between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels. In this case, it can be said that as the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course increase, their social skill levels also increase. However, it was found that students' attitudes towards social studies course explained 25% of the variance in students' social skills. Based on this result, it is seen that the attitude towards the social studies course is a significant predictor of social skills.

Keywords: Social skills, attitude, social studies course

1. Introduction

Social Studies course is one of the most important courses that prepare children for social life. Social Studies plays an important role especially in the realization of affective goals. The child's being a good citizen is related to the affective characteristics in the educational goals of raising a good citizen who has adopted the common values of the society and has developed an attitude accordingly. Social Studies course plays an important role in the realization of one of the most basic aims of education in order to bring active, participatory and democratic citizens to the society (İbrahimoglu, 2009). Effective teaching of Social Studies course largely depends on students' positive attitudes towards this course.

One of the most important affective characteristics of students about a course is attitude (Vatansever-Bayraktar & İşlenen, 2018). Attitudes are a phenomenon that is acquired through learning, directs the behavior of the individual, and causes bias in the decision-making process. Attitudes are formed at the end of the learning process with life and experiences (Tavşancıl, 2010). Attitude is a psychological structure that is seen as an important and critical predictor of individual behaviors with its cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions (Kan & Akbaş, 2005). According to Corbin (1997), there is a positive relationship between attitude and learning effort. A positive attitude towards a lesson or subject includes behaviors such as showing a willingness to reciprocate, being satisfied with reciprocating, accepting that it has a

positive aspect and value, and being a supporter of its acceptance as a value (Özçelik, 1992). It is important to know the affective characteristics of students such as interest and attitude towards the social studies lesson in order for the social studies lesson to fulfill the functions expected from it.

The school environment is an important element in socializing with peers and teachers for children in the age of growth and development. Primary education basically aims to prepare students for daily life and to provide them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they will use in daily life. One of the basic skills to be acquired in primary education is social skills. Social skills are very important for individuals to be in a healthy relationship with other individuals, to comply with the rules of society, to take responsibility, to be helpful to others, and to use their rights. In order for an individual to be a member of that society, he or she must be a part of the society. This is possible with social skills. Among the important functions of primary education are the development and reinforcement of social skills in students and their application in different environments (Çubukçu & Gültekin, 2006).

Social skill acquisitions start from the first days of life. It covers all the changes that occur with adaptation to the social environment in the stages of birth, growth and development. Social skills enable people to behave appropriately in social environments, to be accepted in society, to establish positive communication between individuals, etc. It is defined as the general name of helpful attitudes, behaviors and thoughts (Samancı & Uçan, 2017). According to Hersen and Bellack (1976), social skills include the ability to express positive and negative emotions without the problem of losing social power in an interpersonal context. Each skill requires coordinating appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses. When the definitions related to social skills are examined, the concept of social skills can be defined as the skills that enable the individual to have strong interpersonal communication, to easily find a place in society, to express emotions easily, and to easily adapt to an environment.

In terms of social skills, children who lack social skills at a young age become a major problem in their professional and academic success, relationships with the individuals around them, and emotional-behavioral areas throughout their lives (Durualp & Aral, 2010). According to the study of Samancı and Diş (2014), it is seen that students with weak social skills do not trust themselves, do not communicate with their friends in general, do not want to express their thoughts, have low academic achievement and have difficulty in fulfilling their responsibilities.

In the related literature, there are studies on attitudes towards the social studies course and social skills. (Aktepe, Tahiroğlu, & Sargın, 2014; Avcı & Gümüş, 2020; Çetinkaya & Hatay Uçar, 2019; Demir & Akengin, 2010; Demir, 2010; Eryılmaz & Deveci, 2022; Karakuş, 2006; Ocak and Didin, 2018; Özkal, 2002; Özkal, Güngör & Çetingöz, 2004; Öztürk & Baysal, 1999; Öztürk & Korkmaz, 2020; Sağdıç, 2013; Şener, 2021; Şimşek & Demir, 2012; Tay & Akyürek Tay, 2006; Ulu Kalın & Topkaya, 2017; Yılmaz & Şeker, 2011). As a result of all these literature reviews, no research has been found that examines the relationship between middle school students' attitudes towards the social studies course and their social skills. The lack of literature in investigating the relationship between attitude towards social studies course and social skills shows the importance of the contribution of this study to the literature. It is thought that this research will help teachers who want to increase students' social skills levels and attitudes towards the course within the scope of social studies course, to understand the relationship between students' attitudes towards social studies course and social skills. For this reason, it is considered important to determine the relationship between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels. The

aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the attitudes of secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels. In order to achieve this aim, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What is the level of secondary school students' attitudes towards social studies course?
2. What is the level of social skills of secondary school students?
3. Is there a relationship between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels?
4. Is the secondary school students' attitudes towards social studies a predictor of their social skills?

2. Method

This research is a descriptive study in the relational survey model. Quantitative research method was used in this study. Relational survey method is generally used to determine the current situation between two or more variables or to determine the possible results due to this current situation (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). This method was preferred because it was aimed to examine the relationship between the attitude towards the social studies course and the variables of social skills.

2.1. Study group

The study group of the research consists of 210 secondary school students studying at the level (5.6.7. grades) in the 2021-2022 academic year. Convenience sampling method was used in the study. Convenience sampling is defined as sampling in the immediate environment, easily accessible and based on volunteerism (Erkuş, 2009). In this direction, this sampling method was used since the study was carried out with students studying at schools in the vicinity close to the researchers and participating in the research voluntarily. The frequency and percentage distributions of the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the research are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics and Percentages of Participants*

Gender	N	%
Female	125	59,5
Male	85	40,5
Grade level		
5th grade	71	33,8
6th grade	70	33,3
7th grade	69	32,8
TOTAL	210	100

Of the 210 students participating in the study, 125 (59.5%) were female and 85 (40.5%) were male. 71 (33.8%) of the secondary school students are in the 5th grade, 70 (33.3%) were in the 6th grade, 69 (32.8%) were in the 7th grade.

2.2. Data Collection

There are three parts in the data collection tool of the research. The first part consists of personal information form regarding demographic variables such as gender and grade level of secondary school students. In the second part, "Attitude Scale Towards Social Studies Lesson" in order to determine the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies lesson; In the third part, "Social Skills Scale" was used to determine the social skills of the students.

The Attitude Scale Towards Social Studies Lesson developed by Uzun (2006) was used as a data collection tool in the research. The scale is a 5-point Likert type scale. Of the 32 items in the scale, 16 are positive statements and 16 are negative statements. Positive items in the scale were scored as "strongly agree" 5, "agree" 4, "undecided" 3, "disagree" 2 and strongly disagree" 1, while negative items were scored exactly the opposite. The scale includes 32 items and three sub-dimensions. These three factors are affective, cognitive and behavioral sub-dimensions. The reliability of the three subscales, respectively; .88, .83. and .70, and its general reliability was calculated as .92. In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be .94 for the entire scale applied to 210 people. However, the internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions were .85 for "Cognitive", .85 for "Affective" and .79 for "Behavioral".

The other data collection tool of the research is the "Social Skills Scale" developed by Yurdakavuştu (2012). The scale consists of 20 items. For each question in the 4-point Likert-type scale; Scores are given as 1 (Never), 2 (Sometimes), 3 (Often), 4 (Always). The reliability of the scale, calculated using the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient, was found to be .89. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the entire scale, which was applied to 210 people for this study, was determined as .85.

2.3. Data Analysis

Research data were analyzed with SPSS 23 (Statistical Package of Social Science) program. In order to solve the sub-problems in the research, firstly, a score was calculated for that factor by calculating the arithmetic mean scores of the items in each sub-scale. Analyzes were made on these factor scores. "What is the level of secondary school students' attitudes towards social studies course in descriptive analysis? And what is the level of social skills of secondary school students?" sub-problems, frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation scores were used.

Pearson Product Moments Correlation Coefficient (r) was determined in calculating the relations between the variables while solving the sub-problem "Is there a relationship between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels?". A Pearson Product Moments Correlation Coefficient of 1.00 indicates a perfectly positive relationship; -1.00 indicates a perfect negative relationship; A value of 0.00 indicates that there is no relationship (Büyüköztürk, 2008).

"Is the attitudes of social studies teacher candidates towards social studies course a predictor of their social skills?" group mean scores in interpreting the significant differences while solving the sub-problem, and .05 significance level was checked. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was applied to determine the predictive level of the independent variable for the dependent variables. In the interpretation of the regression analyzes, standardized Beta (β) coefficients and t-test scores for their significance were considered. Multiple regression analysis is a form of analysis aimed at predicting the dependent variable that depends on two

or more independent variables that are related to the dependent variable. It serves to interpret the total variance of the dependent variable by the predictor variables, the statistical significance of the explained variance to the predictor variables, and the direction of the relationship between the dependent variable and the predictor variables (Büyüköztürk, 2008).

2.4. Ethical Consent of the Research

In this article, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, journal ethics rules have been followed. Responsibility for any violations that may arise regarding the article belongs to the authors. Ethics committee approval of the article was obtained by Kırıkkale University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision dated 18.03.2021 and numbered 03.

3. Findings and Comments

In this section, analysis results are given in the order of the sub-problems.

3.1. Findings Regarding the First and Second Sub-Problems

In this part of the research, there are analyzes of the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and the mean and standard deviation scores of their social skill levels.

Table 2. *Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Variables*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>S</i>
1.Cognitive attitude	3,98	,65
2.Affective attitude	4,11	,59
3.Behavioral attitude	4,01	,53
4.Social skills total	3.26	,44

When the table is examined, it is seen that the students' cognitive attitude average ($X=3.98$), affective attitude average ($X= 4.11$), and behavioral attitude average ($X= 4.01$) are at the level. Accordingly, it has been determined that the students' attitudes towards the social studies course have the highest affective attitude dimension. It is seen that the students' social skills average scores are at ($X =3.26$) level.

3.2. Findings Regarding the Third Sub-Problem

In this part of the research, the results of the correlation analysis made on the relationship between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels are included.

Table 3. *Correlations Between Variables*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1.Cognitive attitude	1	.87**	.74**	.42**
2.Affective attitude		1	.76**	.40**
3.Behavioral attitude			1	.48**
4.Social skills total				1

According to Table 3, when the results of the correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skills are examined, there is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between the cognitive attitudes of the students towards the social studies course and their social skills ($r = .42, p < .01$), a moderate, positively significant relationship between their affective attitudes and social skills ($r = .40, p < .01$), a moderate, positively significant relationship between their behavioral attitudes and social skills ($r = .48, p < .01$).

When the social studies course attitude scale was examined, it was seen that there were significant relations between its sub-dimensions. A high level of positive significant relationship between cognitive attitude and affective attitude ($r = .87, p < .01$), a high level of positive significant relationship between cognitive attitude and behavioral attitude ($r = .74, p < .01$), a high level of positive and significant relationship ($r = .76, p < .01$) was found between affective attitude and behavioral attitude.

3.3. Findings Related to the Fourth Sub-Problem

The results of the regression analysis regarding the prediction of the attitude towards the social studies course according to the social skills are given in the table.

Table 4. *The Results of the Regression Analysis Regarding the Prediction of the Attitude Towards the Social Studies Course According to the Social Skills*

	B	Standart Error	β	t	p
Constant	1.62	.212		7.699	.000
Cognitive attitude	.116	.088	.170	1.318	.189
Affective attitude	-.034	.101	-.046	-.340	.734
Behavioral attitude	.329	.081	.395	4.062	.000

($R = .50, R^2 = .25; F(3-209) = 22.358, p < .01$)

When the analysis results are examined, it is seen that cognitive attitude, affective attitude and behavioral attitude variables together give a significant relationship with social skill levels ($R = .50, p < .01$). It can be said that it is explained by the attitude towards the social studies course. In other words, it is seen that cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes towards social studies course are a significant predictor of social skills.

4. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In this study, the relationship between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies course and their social skills was examined. When the research findings are evaluated; A moderate positive correlation was found between the attitudes of the secondary students towards the social studies course and their social skill levels. In this case, it can be said that as the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the social studies lesson increase, their social skill levels also increase. However, it was found that students' attitudes towards social studies course explained 25% of the variance in students' social skills. Based on this result, it is seen that the attitude towards the social studies course is a significant predictor of social skills. On the other hand, when the results of the research were evaluated, it was determined that the attitudes and social skills of the secondary school students towards the social studies course were positive.

There are studies that are parallel to the results of the research and that are not. As a matter of fact, Aktepe, Tahiroğlu, and Sargin (2014) in their study that they aimed to reveal the

students' attitude levels towards the social studies lesson, concluded that the students generally have a positive attitude towards the social studies lesson. Similarly, Haladyna et al. (1982) and Swift (1993) also revealed that students' attitudes towards the social studies course were positive. Similar research results are found in the relevant literature (Ergin, 2006; Uzun, 2006; Şimşek & Demir, 2012; Kadioğlu Ateş & Vatansever Bayraktar, 2020; Karasu Avcı & Faiz (2020). In the study conducted by Altıntaş (2005), it was concluded that primary school students' attitudes towards the social studies course were neutral.

Based on the research findings, we can say that social skills and attitude appear as two concepts that affect each other. It can be said that developing social skills and their sub-dimensions can have a significant impact on the attitude towards the course. Considering the importance of both factors, positive developments can be seen in students' personal lives, communication and adaptation skills with planned activities. Considering the importance of both factors, positive developments can be seen in students' personal lives, communication and adaptation skills with planned activities. Because social skills that should be acquired by students in primary education are important. As a matter of fact, in the study of Çubukçu and Gültekin (2006) in which they tried to reveal the degree of importance of the social skills that should be acquired by the students in the primary education process, it was determined that the teachers gave the highest score to the social skills area. It includes the skills of starting and maintaining the relationship the most. In addition, certain processes can be developed to improve students' attitudes towards social skills and social studies course, and their academic success can be increased. Because there is a significant relationship between students' attitudes towards the course and their academic success. Tay and Akyürek Tay (2006) draw attention to the relationship between attitude and success in their studies and state that as the level of attitude towards the course increases, the success also increases. Similarly, Yılmaz and Demir (2014) concluded that there is a significant relationship between attitude towards the course and academic achievement. Teachers should make an effort to bring positive attitudes towards their students towards the lesson and identify the negative ones. Students who develop positive attitudes communicate with the income circle, respect their teachers, and thus increase the success by directing all these attitudes in the learning-teaching process (Hünük, 2006). While it is desirable for the student to develop a positive attitude towards the lesson, the student may also develop a negative attitude towards the lesson. In this case, as stated by Ülgen (1997), the student does not want to do his homework and attend the class, or he may create various reasons for not participating in the lesson, and may experience conflicts with himself when he needs to do homework. In addition to this situation, the teacher himself can be an element in developing a negative attitude towards the lesson. As a matter of fact, Yılmaz and Beşir (2014) concluded that there is a positive relationship between students' attitudes towards their teachers and their attitudes towards the lesson. Regarding the teacher, Osborne et al. (2003) draws attention to the teaching method and learning environment and states that the elements affect the students' attitudes towards the lesson. As a matter of fact, according to Chiodo and Byford (2004), students may acquire negative attitudes towards the lesson due to the teaching methods used in the social studies lesson. McGowan et al., (1990) state that students' negative attitudes towards social studies lesson stem from the teacher's teaching approach, not the content of the lesson. From this point of view, different methods, techniques, activities and examples should be used during the lesson in order to eliminate negative attitudes. In this respect, different methods, techniques and activities should be used during the lesson in order to eliminate negative attitudes.

In addition, when students are provided with an enriched education environment in which they can actively participate, students display a more positive attitude towards the social studies course (Öztürk & Baysal, 1999). For example, games include a wide range of skills, develop

self-confidence and social skills, and the game has its own dynamics and rules and serves quality learning where children have the opportunity to have fun (Gözalan & Koçak, 2014). In this respect, students' negative attitudes towards the lesson can be eliminated by using games in order to provide qualified, interesting, fun and permanent learning. In a study conducted to evaluate children's social skills, Walsh et al., (2006) draw attention to the fact that children with a game-based program are more advantageous in terms of thinking and social skills. Similarly, while game-based interventions are recommended for students with social maladjustment and social skill deficiencies (Glover-Gagnon & Nagle, (2004), game-based teaching environments are also needed to gain social skills (Pivec, 2007). The use of teaching methods and techniques designed based on the understanding of social studies can lead to the development of a positive attitude towards the social studies course (Yılmaz & Şeker, 2011).

As a result, in this study, which aims to examine the relationship between students' attitudes towards social studies course and their social skill levels, it was concluded that as students' attitudes towards social studies course increase, their social skill levels increase. Considering that both situations affect the success of the students in the social studies course, different classroom climates should be created and arrangements should be made in order to increase the positive attitude towards the course and to gain social skills. Thus, academic success in social studies course can be increased.

Suggestions

- According to the results of the research, it can be suggested to use more different methods, techniques, activities and examples in schools to improve students' social skills.
- Qualitative studies can be conducted to examine the attitudes and social skills of students towards the Social Studies course in more depth.
- Curriculums can be designed to support students' social skills more with skill-based teaching methods.

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