

Investigation of Secondary School Students' Attitudes Towards Social Studies Course in Terms of Academic Motivation and Some Variables

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses and the variables of academic motivation, gender and social studies course report card grade. Relational survey model was used in the study. As a result of the multiple linear regression analysis, the variables of amotivation and intrinsic motivation were determined as predictors of students' attitudes towards social studies courses. According to hierarchical regression modelling, the power of variables to predict attitude is firstly amotivation and then intrinsic motivation. As a consequence, it was determined that there was no relationship between students' attitudes towards social studies course and their social studies course report card grades and gender, but there was a significant relationship between amotivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. It was concluded that the first predictor of students' attitudes towards social studies course was amotivation, followed by intrinsic motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Attitude is the reactions one shows towards conditions, events and people, the expression of one's thoughts and feelings (Glenn 2011), and the psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a certain entity positively or negatively (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). Attitudes show one's tendency to accept or reject objects, ideas and groups, and one's feelings in favour or against them (Gay and Airasian 2000). Attitude is the attitude, stance, mental, emotional and behavioural reactions that an individual takes towards any phenomenon, object, social issue or event in their environment based on their experience, knowledge, feelings and motives (Inceoglu 2010). Knowing what an individual's attitude towards an object or stimulus is will

enable one to predict what that individual's behaviour towards the relevant stimulus will be (Üstüner 2006). Attitudes are not just a behavioural tendency or an emotion, but an integration of cognition-emotion-behavior tendencies (Kagitçibasi 2006). An individual's behaviour can be said to be the attitude, which is a guiding element, and is organised through experiences and is formed at the end of the learning process. Attitude, which is an important element of the educational process, is effective in the realisation of learning (Gencel 2006). There are many studies revealing that there is a relationship between students' attitudes towards the course and their academic achievement and their level of achieving the objectives of the curriculum (Yilmazer and Demir 2014; Siral 2020; Ilhan et al. 2021). While positive attitudes make students more successful in the learning process, negative attitudes can cause failure (Kazazoglu 2013). When a student develops a negative attitude towards a course, they do not want to attend the class or do their homework, and may

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look for excuses not to attend the class. When they have to do their homework, they may enter into conflict with themselves. On the other hand, students who develop positive attitudes spend more time, pay more attention and work harder on the subjects and subjects that they are not interested in (Ulgen 1995).

Motivation is the thoughts, hopes and beliefs that mobilise people and determine the direction of their actions (Orucu and Kambur 2008). It is clear that motivation has an important effect on the attitude and learning behaviour of the learner (Ryan and Deci 2000). Since motivation is effective in making the individual willing for behaviour, it appears as one of the significant factors that bring the effectiveness of the learning and teaching period to the foreground (Akbaba 2006). Academic motivation, on the other hand, is the students' willingness to comply with school rules, do their homework, study for exams, and attend classes during their education (Ryan and Deci 2000). Bozanoglu (2004) defines academic motivation as the production of energy needed for learning. Academic motivation is one of the main determinants of a student's performance and success in a course (Green et al. 2006). Existing findings in applied research have shown that motivation is effective in improving students' engagement in learning activities, academic achievement, school attendance, graduation rates, and social competence (Wentzel and Wigfield 2007). It is accepted that students with high motivation are more advantageous in the learning process than students with low motivation or unmotivated students (Zembat et al. 2018). Motivation is one of the most effective factors in achieving the desired goal in educational environments (Akbaba 2006) and the concept of motivation has a great role and importance for education, educators and students.

Motivation has three dimensions, namely, intrinsic, extrinsic and amotivation. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation created by the needs arising from the individual themselves. The source of this motivation can be interest, curiosity, development and sense of competition. Intrinsic motivation is when an individual acts and works with their own will (Akbaba and Aktas 2005). Extrinsic motivation is the type of motivation in which behaviour is performed for a result. The individual exhibits a behaviour for the results of the behaviour rather than the behaviour itself. It refers to behaviours

such as reward or punishment, where the starting point is outside the individual (Deci et al. 1991). Amotivation is the absence of any intention to engage in a behaviour (Markland and Tobin 2004).

Variables such as motivation and attitude significantly affect the learning process and the success or failure of students in the classroom environment (Akpur 2015). In addition, attitude affects motivation (Gardner 2010). Edwards (2006) states that individuals with positive attitudes and high motivation are more successful than individuals with negative and low motivation and that attitude and motivation should be together for successful learning. When the literature is examined, there are studies on attitudes towards social studies lesson and academic motivation (Ergin 2006; Coskun 2011; Yilmaz and Seker 2011; Ilter 2013; Subasi 2013; Aktepe et al. 2014; Arcagok 2016). However, there is no study in literature in which student attitude towards social studies courses and academic motivation are examined together. In order to contribute to filling this gap in literature, this study examined 5th, 6th and 7th grade students' attitudes towards social studies lessons and their academic motivation together.

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses are predicted by academic motivation and some variables.

In line with this main purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Is there a significant relationship between middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses and academic motivation, gender and social studies course report card grade variables?
2. What are the variables that predict middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses?

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

In this study, a relational survey model was used. In the study, it was tried to determine whether middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses are predicted by academic motivation (extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and amotivation), gender and previous social studies course report card grade variables. In the

study, correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relation between the variables. Then, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted with the variables of academic motivation, gender and previous social studies course report card grade to predict students' attitudes towards social studies courses.

Study Group

The sample of the study consists of 217 secondary school students studying in 4 secondary schools in the Trabzon province of Turkey in the 2022-2023 academic year. 98 of these students are girls and 119 are boys. 143 of the students are in the lower socio-economic group and 74 are in the middle socio-economic group. The grade levels of the students are 80 5th grade, 73 6th grade and 64 7th grade.

Data Collection Tools

The "Social Studies Course Academic Motivation Scale" developed by Arcagok (2016) and the "Attitude Scale towards Social Studies Course" developed by Gencel (2006) were used as data collection tools in the study.

The Social Studies Course Academic Motivation Scale developed by Arcagok (2016) consists of 14 5-point Likert-type items and 3 factors. The KMO value of the scale was .791 and the Barlett's test of sphericity value ($X^2=2064.746, p<.01$) was significant. The common variance values of the items of the scale are between 0.39 and 0.66. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient is 0.703. When the reliability coefficients for the factors of the scale were examined, it was determined that the first factor (extrinsic motivation) was .808, the second factor (intrinsic motivation) was .755 and the third

factor (amotivation) was .738. The first sub-factor of the scale, extrinsic motivation, has five items, the second sub-factor, intrinsic motivation, has five items, and the third sub-factor, amotivation, has four items. The "Attitude Scale Towards Social Studies Course" developed by Gencel (2006) consists of 35 items in 5-point Likert type and one factor. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.95. The common variance values of the items of the scale are between 0.47 and 0.77.

Data Analysis

Correlation analysis, multiple linear regression analysis and hierarchical regression analysis were performed on the data obtained within the scope of the research since the distribution normality and homogeneity prerequisites were met. According to the findings obtained from the analyses conducted in the research, it was tried to determine the relationship between students' attitudes towards social studies courses and their motivation towards social studies courses and to what extent gender and report card grade affect/predict this relationship.

RESULTS

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses, academic motivation, gender and previous social studies course report card grades. The Point-Biserial Correlation Analysis was used for categorical variables and the Pearson Correlation Analysis was used for continuous variables. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis for attitude, motivation, gender and course grades

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--|---|---------|--------|---------|--------|-------|
| 1. Attitude | 1 | -.230** | .405** | -.525** | -.042 | .121 |
| 2. Extrinsic motivation | | 1 | .117 | .446** | .165* | -.031 |
| 3. Intrinsic motivation | | | 1 | -.230** | .060 | .148* |
| 4. Lack of motivation | | | | 1 | .191** | -.129 |
| 5. Gender | | | | | 1 | -.036 |
| 6. Social studies course report card grade | | | | | | 1 |

**p<.01. *p<.05

When Table 1 is analysed, it is seen that the highest relationship is between attitude and amotivation ($r = -.525, p < .01$). However, this relationship is a negative relationship. In other words, as students' positive attitudes towards social studies courses increase, their level of being unmotivated towards social studies courses decreases. Attitude also has a significant positive relationship with extrinsic ($r = -.230, p < .01$) and intrinsic ($r = .405, p < .01$) motivation. This situation shows that increasing students' attitudes towards the course increases their intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Regression Analysis

In the study, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how much of the variance in middle school students' attitudes towards the social studies course is explained by the variables of academic motivation (extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and amotivation), gender and previous social studies course report card grade. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the variables to be included in the analysis. Before the regression analysis, normality, linearity and homogeneity assumptions were examined and it was determined that the assumptions were met. In the regression analysis, attitude was taken as the dependent variable, and extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, amotivation, gender and previous social studies course report card grade were taken as independent variables.

As a result of multiple linear regression analysis, a significant regression model was obtained ($F(5, 211) = 24.49, p < .001$). When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that intrinsic motivation and amotivation variables are the variables predicting students' attitudes towards social studies courses. Considering the R^2 value, it is understood that intrinsic motivation and amotivation variables together explain 36.7 percent of student attitude. When the standardised regression coefficients are examined, it is understood that the variable of amotivation ranks first as the predictor of attitude ($\beta = -.419$). In other words, when attitude increases by 1 unit, students' amotivation decreases by 7.26 units. The intrinsic motivation variable comes second as the predictor of students' attitudes towards social studies courses ($\beta = .314$). When students' attitudes increase, their intrinsic motivation also increases.

As a result of the multiple linear regression analysis, the variables of amotivation and intrinsic motivation were determined as predictors of students' attitudes towards social studies courses. Therefore, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted with these variables. In the analysis, firstly, the variable of amotivation, which predicts attitude in the first order, was included in the model. Then the intrinsic motivation variable was added.

When Table 3 is analysed, the amotivation variable alone predicts 27.6 percent of the students' attitudes towards the social studies course. When the intrinsic motivation variable was added to the

Table 2: Variables predicting student attitude according to multiple linear regression analysis

| Variables | B | Standard error | β | p | R^2 |
|--|--------|----------------|---------|------|-------|
| 2. Extrinsic motivation | -1.606 | 1.208 | -.084 | .185 | .367 |
| 3. Intrinsic motivation | 6.750 | 1.266 | .314* | .000 | |
| 4. Lack of motivation | -7.266 | 1.135 | -.419* | .000 | |
| 5. Gender | 1.357 | 2.289 | .033 | .554 | |
| 6. Social studies course report card grade | .338 | 1.001 | .019 | .736 | |

Table 3: Hierarchical regression analysis results

| Model | Variables | B | Standard error | β | p | R^2 |
|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------|---------|------|-------|
| Model 1 | (Fixed) | 140.565 | 2.989 | | .000 | .276 |
| | Lack of motivation | -9.098 | 1.006 | -.525 | .000 | |
| Model 2 | (Fixed) | 113.717 | 5.757 | | .000 | .361 |
| | Lack of motivation | -7.902 | .973 | -.456 | .000 | |
| | Intrinsic motivation | 6.460 | 1.208 | .300 | .000 | |

model, amotivation and intrinsic motivation together predicted 36.1 percent of the attitude variance. In other words, the intrinsic motivation variable contributes 8.5 percent to the model. Therefore, the predictive power of these two variables together increases. The model was found statistically significant in this way ($F(2,214)=60.428, p < .001$). As a result, the predictive power of the variables is firstly amotivation ($\beta = -.525$) and then intrinsic motivation ($\beta = -.456$).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to examine the extent to which middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses are predicted in terms of academic motivation and some variables. In line with this purpose, it was sought to answer the questions of whether there is a significant relationship between middle school students' attitudes towards social studies courses and academic motivation, gender and social studies course report card grade variables and the variables that predict attitudes towards social studies courses.

Gardner (2006) states that motivation has attitudinal components and attitudes have motivational consequences and that attitude and motivation are closely related. Smith (1971), on the other hand, states that the best approach to understanding attitude is to examine the situation of students with high motivation and reveals the relationship between attitude and motivation. As a result of the study, it was determined that there was no relationship between students' attitudes towards social studies courses and their social studies course report card grades and gender, but there was an important relationship between amotivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The following conclusion was reached that the first predictor of students' attitudes towards social studies courses was amotivation and then intrinsic motivation. When the studies examining attitudes and academic motivation towards different courses at the secondary school level and at different levels of education are evaluated, there are studies that show similarities and differences with the results of this study. The results of the study are similar to the study of Akandere et al. (2010) in which they examined the attitudes of secondary school students towards physical education courses and their motivation for academic achieve-

ment. Akandere et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between students' attitudes towards physical education courses and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation scores, which are sub-dimensions of academic motivation scale. However, in the same study, no significant relationship was found between amotivation, which is a sub-dimension of academic motivation, and attitude scores towards physical education courses. This result differs from the results of the study in which the relationship between amotivation and attitude was determined and amotivation ranked first as a predictor of attitude. Kiliç (2022) reveals similar results with this study in his study. In his study, Kiliç (2022) examined the relationship between the attitudes of 8th grade middle school students towards mathematics and their academic motivation, and as a result of the study, it was determined that the total attitude score had a weak positive relationship with the sub-dimensions of academic motivation, intrinsic motivation for science, intrinsic motivation for success and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, and a moderate negative relationship with amotivation. This study draws attention as another study examining the relationship between academic motivation and attitude towards the course at the middle school level. In a quasi-experimental study, Froiland (2011) taught students' families various techniques for autonomy support that would enable them to support them in their homework. As a result of the study, it was determined that this support provided by parents to their children led to positive changes in their attitudes towards homework, which in turn increased their intrinsic motivation. This result of the study is important in terms of revealing the relationship between attitude and intrinsic motivation.

When the studies conducted at the undergraduate level are examined, there are studies that reveal parallel results with this study. Ayik and Atas (2014) concluded that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of pre-service teachers is a significant predictor of attitude towards teaching profession, and determined that there is a significant relationship between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession and their perceptions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at a medium level. Geri (2013) found a positive and moderate relationship between positive attitudes towards physical education and sports service course and extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation from the sub-

dimensions of academic motivation scale, and a positive and weak relationship with amotivation. In the study of Zembat et al. (2018), it was determined that there was a positive moderate relationship between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession and the intrinsic motivation sub-dimension, and a negative moderate relationship between the amotivation sub-dimension. While the results of the study show parallels with this study, the result that no significant relationship was found between extrinsic motivation and attitude differs from this study.

Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) found a positive correlation between attitude and motivation in their study on the effect of attitude and motivation in language learning. In their studies on university students by Geri (2013), Guido (2013), Balci (2023), and Tasgin and Coskun (2018), it was determined that there was a positive correlation between attitude and motivation. Kara (2021) and Cevik et al. (2023), in their studies on secondary school students, determined that there was a positive correlation between attitude and motivation. Seyhan (2020) on the other hand, determined a negative correlation between attitude and motivation in his study with high school students.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, a significant positive relationship was found between extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation, which are sub-dimensions of the academic motivation scale, and attitude towards social studies course, while a negative relationship was found with attitude towards social studies course in the sub-dimension of amotivation.

As a result of the findings obtained in the study, a significant model was obtained as a result of multiple regression analysis. It was concluded that intrinsic motivation and amotivation variables were predictive variables of students' attitudes towards social studies course.

According to the results of the research, it was concluded that the variable that predicted students' attitudes towards social studies course the most was amotivation, while when the intrinsic motivation variable was added to the model, it was determined that amotivation and intrinsic motivation predicted a significant portion of the variance of attitudes towards social studies course.

As another result of the study, it was determined that social studies course note and gender were not predictive variables of attitude towards social studies course.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, no significant relationship was found between students' attitudes towards social studies courses and gender and social studies course report card grade. It is recommended to conduct detailed studies on this situation. In this study, middle school students' attitudes towards social studies course were examined according to the variables of academic motivation, gender and social studies report card grade. Studies can be conducted to examine secondary school students' attitudes towards social studies courses in terms of different variables.

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