



# Language Teaching and Educational Research

e-ISSN 2636-8102  
Volume 7, Issue 2 | 2024

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**Vural Tünkler  
Orhan Bulut**

**To cite this article:**

Tünkler, V., & Bulut, O. (2024). Investigation of the relationship between secondary school students' perceived school experiences and attitude and motivations towards social studies. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 7(2), 94-106. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.1567060>

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## Investigation of the relationship between secondary school students' perceived school experiences and attitude and motivations towards social studies

Vural Tünkler ✉ [ORCID](#)

Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of Turkish and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta, Türkiye

\*Orhan Bulut ✉ [ORCID](#)

Student, Graduate School of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta, Türkiye

### Article Info

**Type:** Original research

**Received:** 14 October 2024

**Accepted:** 16 December 2024

### Keywords:

Perceived school experience

Attitude

Motivation

Middle school students

### DOI:

10.35207/later.1567060

### \*Corresponding author

world200188@gmail.com

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between middle school students' perceived school experiences and their attitudes and motivation towards social studies course. The participants of the relational model research consisted of 305 middle school students studying in a province of Turkey. The data of the study were collected with "Personal Information Form", "Perceived School Experiences Scale", "Attitude Towards Social Studies Course Scale" and "Motivation Scale on Social Studies Course". Descriptive statistics, t-test, one-factor analysis of variance and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. According to the results of the study, it was determined that gender did not have any effect on students' perceived school experiences, attitudes and motivation towards social studies course. While there was a significant difference in students' perceived school experiences and motivation towards social studies course according to grade level, no difference was found in their attitudes towards social studies. According to academic achievement, students' perceived school experiences and attitudes towards social studies course did not differ significantly, while their motivation differed significantly. There was a significant positive relationship between students' perceived school experiences and their attitudes and motivation towards social studies course.

**Suggested APA citation:** Tünkler, V., & Bulut, O. (2024). Investigation of the relationship between secondary school students' perceived school experiences and attitude and motivations towards social studies. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 7(2), 94-106. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.1567060>

**Ethics statement:** We hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all the stages of the study. We take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute.

**Statement of interest:** We have no conflict of interest to declare.

**Funding:** None

**Acknowledgements:** None

## INTRODUCTION

In Türkiye, primary school students spend about a quarter of the day at school. It is known that the experiences spent in this period have positive effects on academic achievement through affective characteristics such as attitudes and motivation (Lee, & Smith, 1999).

In addition to learning academic knowledge, school is an important social experience environment in terms of social, affective and behavioral aspects (Güler, & Bedel, 2022). Such acquisitions, which are necessary for individuals to continue their lives in society and step into a peaceful future, can be transferred through the social studies course, which is an important part of the primary education curriculum. Indeed, in terms of its goals, social studies has the potential to extend to the entire school day when children connect with their peers (Zarrillo, 2012). It would not be surprising to think of this course as “*all things to all people*” (Holcomb, Beal, & Lee, 2011), which becomes more meaningful and valuable for students (Fredericks, 2007) when lesson practices are integrated with experiences that reflect democratic life (Holcomb et al., 2011).

Social studies, which meets the definition of “*a catch-all subject*” or “a little bit of this and a little bit of that” (Holcomb et al., 2011), is in a dynamic relationship with many other disciplines due to its interdisciplinary nature. For example, while it connects with science in recognizing and protecting the environment and developing positive attitudes towards the environment, it benefits from mathematics in preparing and interpreting graphs and tables. In short, social studies in harmony with other subjects is a valuable source of motivation in students' school experiences. Although school motivation, which is a determinant of individuals' academic performance and task persistence (Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell, 2014), has been explained using various components, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have been widely examined in many motivation theories (Ryan, & Deci, 2000). In this study, we also examined attainment motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is doing an activity for internal satisfaction rather than external pressure or rewards (Ryan, & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is based on the desire to obtain some results, such as rewards, outside the activity itself (Amabile, 1993). Although in reality both motivate individuals to take action, they can have very different effects on subjective feelings about the activity, the desire to do the activity, and the quality of performance in the activity (Amabile, 1993). Finally, attainment motivation represents the personal value of completing an activity consistent with self-image (Eccles, 1994). In a way, attainment is related to intrinsic reasons (Gao, & Xiang, 2008). For a student who cares more about being successful in social studies than in other courses, spending more time and effort on the activities in this course can be explained by attainment motivation; participating in the activities in this course voluntarily and with pleasure without any pressure can be explained by intrinsic motivation; and seeing success in this course as a means to gain the appreciation of the social studies teacher or for school success can be explained by extrinsic motivation. So what is the level of student motivation towards social studies? Studies have revealed that student motivation for social studies is not at the desired level (Tünkler, 2019a, 2022). It can be argued that the loss of valued alternatives nurtured by school experiences is effective in this. As a matter of fact, it is known that students show less interest in social studies than Turkish, mathematics and science courses due to the high-stakes test policy implemented in Turkey, and the perceived importance of the course is not as expected (Tünkler, 2019b, 2022). The finding of Pallak et al. (1982) that school experience is an important determinant of children's intrinsic motivation supports our view.

Expectations related to any course in schools play an important role in the development of students' attitudes towards the course (Wilkins, & Ma, 2003). Schools, which have a set of attitudes that affect students' affective characteristics (Rutter et al., 1979, as cited in Shirazi, 2017), can direct student attitudes that emerge as a result of experience. In his study, Oğur (2009) concluded that students' attitudes towards the social studies course vary according to the school where they receive education, and the reason for this may be the teachers in charge in schools, the school environment, and the quality of education offered in schools. In Altıntaş's (2005) study, students' attitudes towards the course were neutral and started to decrease as the income level increased. Today,

students' finding social studies boring is due to negative perceptions about the course. The orientation towards career opportunities in mathematics and science has caused social studies to be neglected, disliked or not seen as an important subject (Omolara, & Adebukola, 2015; Schug, Todd, & Beery, 1982). Attitude, which is an effective factor in students' academic achievement, facilitates or hinders learning (Uysal, & Doğruöz, 2023). Özkal and Çetingöz (2006) found that successful students had more positive attitudes than unsuccessful students. Yılmaz and Demir (2014) found that students' grades in social studies course positively affected their attitudes towards social studies course.

A safe and supportive school climate where students have positive social relationships and feel respected, engaged, and competent has long been a desire of teachers and parents (National School Climate Council, 2007). A school characterized by a conducive learning environment, high teacher support, and perceptions of safety is associated with students' positive school experiences, including satisfaction, engagement, and problem avoidance (Buehler et al., 2015). The three main components of students' experiences at school are school connectedness, academic press for learning, and academic motivation (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2012). School connectedness, also referred to as a protective factor, refers to a student's relationship with school (Libbey, 2004). A student's feeling that he/she belongs to the school and that he/she can achieve his/her goals through the school is an indicator of school engagement (Brown, & Evans, 2002). Academic press, on the other hand, explains the academic expectations for the level of learning through the standards that the school follows for learning activities and performance (Lee, & Smith, 1999). Among the components, academic motivation is equated with quantitative changes in behavior such as high achievement in learning activities and more time allocated to learning activities (Ames, 1992). Motivation, which refers to the internal states or processes that mobilize and direct behavior (Maehr, 1974), can increase or decrease depending on students' school experience (Pallak et al., 1982) or can be continuous (Bergin, 1992).

As can be understood from the above-mentioned explanations, being aware of students' perceived school experiences can have beneficial consequences for academic performance. In the literature, students' perceived school experiences (Baytemir, 2019; Demirtaş, & Uygun-Eryurt, 2022; Özdemir, 2015; Rustamov et al, 2023; Somoğlu, & Yazıcı, 2021; Uysal, & Doğruöz, 2023; Yavrutürk, İlhan, & Baytemir, 2020; Yeşilgöz Şengün, 2023), attitude towards social studies course (Akyürek Tay, & Çiçek, 2023; Altıntaş, 2005; Gezer, 2016; Ergin, 2006; Ilgaz, 2018; Özkal, Güngör, & Çetingöz, 2004; Subasi, 2023; Şener, 2021; Şimşek, & Demir, 2012; Tay, & Akyürek Tay, 2006; Tosun, & Nalçacı, 2023; Yılmaz, & Demir, 2014; Zengin, & Ulaş, 2021) and motivation (Arcagök, 2016; Gömleksiz, & Kan, 2021; Özkal, 2013b; Subasi, 2023; Tosun, & Nalçacı, 2023; Tünkler, 2019a, 2019b, 2021; Zengin, & Ulaş, 2021), it is not possible to say the same thing about the relationship between these three variables. This study aims to reveal the relationship between middle school students' perceived school experiences and their attitudes and motivation towards social studies course. Within this general purpose the following questions were addressed:

1. Do the students' perceived school experiences, attitudes and motivations towards social studies course differ significantly by the gender?
2. Do the students' perceived school experiences, attitudes and motivations towards social studies course differ significantly by the grade level?
3. Do the students' perceived school experiences, attitudes and motivations towards social studies course differ significantly by the academic achievement?
4. Are there significant relationships between students' perceived school experiences, attitudes and motivations towards social studies course?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

This study, which focuses on the relationship between middle school students' perceived school experiences and their attitudes and motivation towards social studies course, was employed the relational survey model.

### Participants

The study was conducted in a city that is among the top five provinces in Turkey according to the Socio-Economic Development Index (SEDI-2017) ranking in terms of the second level of development and secondary school enrollment rates (Acar et al., 2019). The participants of the study, which was conducted in five different schools, one private and four public secondary school to ensure diversities, consisted of 305 students studying in the 5th (n=97), 6th (n=100) and 7th grades (n=108) who were taking the social studies course. 161 of the students were female and 144 were male. The students' social studies academic achievement grades were generally high.

### Data collection instruments

In this study, “Personal Information Form”, “Perceived School Experiences Scale”, “Attitude Scale Towards Social Studies Course” and “Motivation Scale on Social Studies Course” were used. Information about the data collection tools is given below.

*Personal Information Form:* Information about the gender, grade level and social studies academic achievement of the students participating in the study was collected through the personal information form developed by the researchers.

*Perceived School Experiences Scale:* The scale developed by Anderson-Butcher et al. (2012) was adapted into Turkish by Baytemir et al. (2015). As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis applied for construct validity, it was reported that the factor loadings of the scale items ranged between .50 and .83 and the fit statistics were adequate. Perceived school experiences scale is a Likert-type measurement tool consisting of 14 items and 3 factors. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .85 for academic press, .83 for academic motivation and .85 for school connectedness. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient were .70 for academic press, .78 for academic motivation, .78 for school connectedness and .88 for the overall scale.

*Attitude Scale Towards Social Studies Course:* The construct validity of the attitude scale towards social studies course developed by Özkal (2002) was tested again in 2013 by applying it to 591 students studying in 6th, 7th and 8th grades. The fit statistics obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis were Normed Fit Index NFI= .96, Comparative Fit Index CFI=.98, Goodness of Fit Index GFI=.87, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation RMSEA= .06 and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual SRMR=.053. The scale consists of 30 items. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of the scale were reported as .93 for the whole scale, .88 for positive attitude and .93 for negative attitude in subscales (Özkal, 2013a). In this study, only the 13-item positive attitude sub-dimension of the scale was used. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient calculated for the positive attitude subscale was .83.

*Motivation Scale on Social Studies Course:* The motivation scale on social studies course developed by Gömleksiz and Kan (2012) is a 5-point Likert-type tool consisting of 23 items. The scale consists of 3 factors with factor loadings ranging between .74 and .45 as a result of statistical procedures. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the overall scale was reported as .79, .80 for intrinsic motivation, .82 for attainment and .74 for extrinsic motivation. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient were .82 for intrinsic motivation, .83 for attainment, .78 for extrinsic motivation and .85 for the overall scale.

### Data analysis

Before analyzing the data of the study, some preliminary studies were conducted to determine which statistical techniques would be applied. For this purpose, missing data and outliers were first analyzed. No missing data were detected in the data set. The z value ( $\pm 3$ ) was used to determine the outliers and the Skewness-Kurtosis values were used to determine the normality of

the distribution ( $\pm 1.5$ ). Participants with subject numbers 125, 130, 288, 289 and 297, which were found to be outliers, were removed from the data set. The number of participants in the study decreased to 305 after the subjects with outlier characteristics were removed.

IBM SPSS 20 program was used for data analysis. In the evaluation of the data, 95% confidence level was taken into consideration. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation, independent groups t-test, one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey's test, Tamhane's T2 test and Pearson correlation coefficient were applied in analyzing the data. All statistical analyses were based on a significance level of .05.

## FINDINGS

### Results across gender

Independent samples t-test was used to examine whether there was a difference in perceived school experiences, attitude and motivations towards social studies course according to the gender of the students. The distribution of mean scores according to gender is given in Table 1.

Table 1. T-test results regarding perceived school experiences, attitude, and motivations in terms of gender

		Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	t	p
Perceived school experiences	Academic press	Girl	161	4.21	.71	.074	.94
		Boy	144	4.20	.73		
	Academic motivation	Girl	161	3.86	.83	.266	.79
		Boy	144	3.83	.85		
	School connectedness	Girl	161	3.96	.93	-.687	.49
		Boy	144	4.03	.94		
General	Girl	161	3.99	.73	-.098	.92	
	Boy	144	3.99	.75			
Attitude	Positive attitude	Girl	161	2.18	.47	-2.495	.01*
		Boy	144	2.31	.42		
Motivation	Intrinsic motivation	Girl	161	3.84	.78	-.731	.46
		Boy	144	3.91	.76		
	Attainment	Girl	161	4.18	.79	2.658	.00*
		Boy	144	3.91	.94		
	Extrinsic motivation	Girl	161	2.94	.92	-2.019	.04*
		Boy	144	3.16	1.01		
General	Girl	161	3.72	.61	.127	.89	
	Boy	144	3.71	.63			

\* $p < .05$

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that male and female students' perceived school experiences and motivation towards the social studies course are close to each other in the scale mean scores. While there was no significant difference in the scores of the participants' perceived school experiences sub-factors and intrinsic motivation sub-factor of motivation according to gender, a significant difference was found in favour of boys ( $\bar{X} = 2.31$ ;  $t_{(303)} = -2.495$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in the positive attitude factor. On the other hand, a significant difference was found in favour of girls ( $\bar{X} = 4.18$ ;  $t_{(303)} = 2.658$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in the attainment sub-factor and in favour of boys ( $\bar{X} = 3.16$ ;  $t_{(303)} = -2.019$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in the extrinsic motivation factor. This finding can be interpreted as that gender does not have any effect on students' perceived school experiences and intrinsic and general motivation for social studies course, but it influences positive attitude, attainment and extrinsic motivation.

### Results across students' class levels

One-factor ANOVA was used to examine whether there was a difference in students' perceived school experiences, attitude and motivations towards social studies course according to grade level. The distribution of mean scores according to grade level is given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** ANOVA results regarding perceived school experiences, attitude, and motivations in terms of class levels

		Class level	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	df	F	P	Sig. difference
<b>Perceived school experiences</b>	Academic press	5	97	4.37	.70				
		6	100	4.17	.69	2/302	3.875	.022*	5-7
		7	108	4.09	.74				
	Academic motivation	5	97	4.06	.83				
		6	100	3.81	.84	2/302	5.407	.005*	5-7
		7	108	3.68	.81				
	School connectedness	5	97	4.24	.85				
		6	100	3.89	.98	2/302	5.039	.007*	5-6, 5-7
		7	108	3.88	.93				
	General	5	97	4.20	.71				
		6	100	3.93	.75	2/302	6.152	.002*	5-6, 5-7
		7	108	3.86	.72				
<b>Attitude</b>	Positive attitude	5	97	2.31	.44				
		6	100	2.24	.42	2/302	1.752	.175	---
		7	108	2.19	.48				
<b>Motivation</b>	Intrinsic motivation	5	97	4.12	.62				
		6	100	3.87	.76	2/302	9.761	.000*	5-6, 5-7
		7	108	3.65	.85				
	Attainment	5	97	4.19	.86				
		6	100	4.10	.85	2/302	3.212	.042*	5-7
		7	108	3.89	.89				
	Extrinsic motivation	5	97	3.21	.94				
		6	100	3.05	1.00	2/302	2.925	.054*	5-7
		7	108	2.89	.96				
	General	5	97	3.91	.55				
		6	100	3.74	.66	2/302	9.630	.000*	5-7, 6-7
			7	108	3.53	.60			

\*p<.05

When Table 2 is examined, it is understood that students' perceived school experiences show a significant difference according to grade level in the overall scale and sub-factors. As a result of the Tukey test conducted to determine from which groups this observed difference originated, there was a significant difference between 5th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =4.37) and 7th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =4.09) in favor of 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=3.875$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in the academic press sub-factor; between 5th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =4.06) and 7th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =3.68) in favor of 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=5.407$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in the academic motivation sub-factor; and between 5th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =4.06) and 7th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =3.68) in favor of 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=5.407$ ,  $p<.05$ ). ( $F_{(2, 302)}=5.407$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in favor of the 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=5.407$ ,  $p<.05$ ); in the sub-factor of school connectedness between 5th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =4.24) and 6th ( $\bar{X}$  =3.89) and 7th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =3.88) in favor of the 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=5.039$ ,  $p<.05$ ); and a significant difference was found between 5th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =4.20) and 6th ( $\bar{X}$  =3.93) and 7th grade ( $\bar{X}$  =3.86) in favor of 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=6.152$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This finding reveals that as the grade level increases, students' perceived school experience decreases.

The mean scores of students' positive attitudes towards social studies ( $F_{(2, 302)}=1.752, p>.05$ ) did not show a significant difference according to grade level. On the other hand, it was determined that the mean scores of students' motivation for social studies showed a significant difference in the overall scale and sub-factors according to the grade level. As a result of the Tamhane's T2 test conducted to determine from which groups this observed difference originated, a significant difference was found between 5th grade ( $\bar{M}=4.12$ ) and 6th grade ( $\bar{M}=3.87$ ) in favor of 5th grade in the intrinsic motivation sub-factor, and between 5th grade ( $\bar{M}=4.12$ ) and 7th grade ( $\bar{M}=3.65$ ) in favor of 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=9.761, p<.05$ ). In the Tukey test conducted to determine the source of the significant difference between the attainment and extrinsic motivation sub-factors and the overall scale, a significant difference was found between the 5th grade ( $\bar{M}=4.19$ ) and 7th grade ( $\bar{M}=3.89$ ) in the caring sub-dimension in favor of the 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=3.212, p<.05$ ); in the extrinsic motivation sub-factor, a significant difference was found between 5th grade ( $\bar{M}=3.21$ ) and 7th grade ( $\bar{M}=2.89$ ) in favor of 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=2.925, p<.05$ ); and in the overall scale, a significant difference was found between 5th grade ( $\bar{M}=3.91$ ) and 6th ( $\bar{M}=3.74$ ) and 7th grade ( $\bar{M}=3.53$ ) in favor of 5th grade ( $F_{(2, 302)}=9.630, p<.05$ ). This finding reveals that as the grade level increases, students' motivation towards social studies course decreases.

### Results across academic achievement

One-factor ANOVA was used to examine whether there was a difference in students' perceived school experiences, attitude and motivations towards social studies course according to academic achievement. The distribution of mean scores according to academic achievement is given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** ANOVA results regarding perceived school experiences, attitude, and motivations in terms of academic achievement

		Academic achievement	N	$\bar{M}$	Sd	df	F	P	Sig. difference
Perceived school experiences	Academic press	0-59	12	3.91	1.01	2/302	1.180	.309	---
		60-84	65	4.26	.64				
		85-100	228	4.20	.72				
	Academic motivation	0-59	12	3.54	1.09	2/302	1.142	.321	---
		60-84	65	3.78	.69				
		85-100	228	3.88	.86				
	School connectedness	0-59	12	3.52	1.17	2/302	1.888	.153	---
		60-84	65	4.09	.75				
		85-100	228	4.00	.96				
	General	0-59	12	3.64	1.00	2/302	1.413	.245	---
		60-84	65	4.01	.54				
		85-100	228	4.00	.77				
Attitude	Positive attitude	0-59	12	2.01	.47	2/302	2.206	.112	---
		60-84	65	2.20	.44				
		85-100	228	2.26	.44				
Motivation	Intrinsic motivation	0-59	12	3.36	.86	2/302	2.793	.063	C-A
		60-84	65	3.88	.73				
		85-100	228	3.90	.77				
	Attainment	0-59	12	2.78	.74	2/302	14.290	.000	B-A, C-A
		60-84	65	4.07	.76				
		85-100	228	4.11	.86				
Extrinsic motivation	0-59	12	3.13	1.15	2/302	3.290	.039	C-B	
	60-84	65	2.77	.89					



	85-100	228	3.12	.97					
	0-59	12	3.10	.56					
General	60-84	65	3.66	.57	2/302	7.242	.000	B-A, C-A	
	85-100	228	3.77	.62					

\* $p < .05$ ; A=0-59, B=60-84, C=85-100

When Table 3 is examined, it is understood that students' perceived school experiences do not differ significantly according to academic achievement in the overall scale ( $F_{(2, 302)}=1.413$ ,  $p > .05$ ), academic press ( $F_{(2, 302)}=1.180$ ,  $p > .05$ ), academic motivation ( $F_{(2, 302)}=1.142$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and school connectedness ( $F_{(2, 302)}=1.888$ ,  $p > .05$ ) sub-factors. This finding can be interpreted as academic achievement does not have any effect on students' perceived school experiences.

The mean scores of students' positive attitudes towards social studies did not show a significant difference according to academic achievement ( $F_{(2, 302)}=2.206$ ,  $p > .05$ ). On the other hand, it is understood that the mean scores of students' motivation for social studies showed a significant difference in the overall scale and sub-factors according to academic achievement. As a result of the Tukey test conducted to determine from which groups this observed difference originated, in the intrinsic motivation sub-factor, there was a significant difference between 0-59 ( $\eta^2=3.36$ ) and 85-100 ( $\eta^2=3.90$ ) academic achievement grades in favor of students with 85-100 academic achievement ( $F_{(2, 302)}=2.793$ ,  $p < .05$ ); in the attainment sub-factor, between 0-59 ( $\eta^2=2.78$ ) and 60-84 ( $\eta^2=4.07$ ) academic achievement grades in favor of students with academic achievement between 60-84, between 0-59 ( $\eta^2=2.78$ ) and 85-100 ( $\eta^2=4.11$ ) academic achievement grades in favor of students with 85-100 academic achievement ( $F_{(2, 302)}=14.290$ ,  $p < .05$ ); in the extrinsic motivation sub-factor, a significant difference was found between 60-84 ( $\eta^2=2.77$ ) and 85-100 ( $\eta^2=3.12$ ) academic achievement grades in favor of students with 85-100 academic achievement ( $F_{(2, 302)}=3.290$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In the motivation scale, there was a significant difference between 0-59 ( $\eta^2=3.10$ ) and 60-84 ( $\eta^2=3.66$ ) academic achievement grades in favor of students with academic achievement between 60-84, and between 0-59 ( $\eta^2=3.10$ ) and 85-100 ( $\eta^2=3.77$ ) academic achievement grades in favor of students with academic achievement between 85-100 ( $F_{(2, 302)}=7.242$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This finding shows that as academic achievement increases, students' motivation towards social studies courses increases.

### Results regarding the relationship between students' perceived school experiences, attitudes, and motivations

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between students' perceived school experiences, attitudes and motivation towards social studies course. The findings of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Correlation analysis results regarding students between perceived school experiences, attitude, and motivations

	$\eta^2$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	3.99		.80**	.93**	.89**	.40**	.59**	.58**	.41**	.26**
2	4.20	.80**		.62**	.60**	.31**	.49**	.50**	.33**	.20**
3	3.84	.93**	.62**		.74**	.39**	.54**	.53**	.36**	.25**
4	4.00	.89**	.60**	.74**		.33**	.52**	.51**	.38**	.21**
5	2.24	.40**	.31**	.39**	.33**		.58**	.68**	.37**	.17**
6	3.72	.59**	.49**	.54**	.52**	.58**		.87**	.70**	.57**
7	3.87	.58**	.50**	.53**	.51**	.68**	.87**		.47**	.38**
8	4.05	.41**	.33**	.36**	.38**	.37**	.70**	.47**		-.04
9	3.05	.26**	.20**	.25**	.21**	.17**	.57**	.38**	-.04	

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ ; 1- Perceived school experiences (general), 2- Academic press, 3- Academic motivation, 4- School connectedness, 5- Attitude for social studies course (positive attitude), 6- Motivation for social studies course (general), 7- Intrinsic motivation, 8- Attainment, 9- Extrinsic motivation

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that there is a positive and moderate level significant relationship between perceived school experiences scale overall ( $r=.40$ ), academic press ( $r=.31$ ), academic motivation ( $r=.39$ ), school connectedness ( $r=.33$ ) and positive attitude towards social studies course. There is a significant and positive relationship between perceived school experiences and motivation towards social studies course ( $r=.59$ ). A positive and high level significant relationship was found between students' perceived school experiences and the sub-factors of academic press ( $r=.80$ ), academic motivation ( $r=.93$ ) and school connectedness ( $r=.89$ ). In addition, a positive and moderate level significant relationship was found between perceived school experiences and intrinsic motivation ( $r=.58$ ) and attainment ( $r=.41$ ), and a positive and low significant relationship was found between perceived school experiences and extrinsic motivation ( $r=.26$ ).

When the relationship between students' positive attitudes towards social studies course and their general motivation is examined, it is seen that there is a positive and moderate level significant relationship ( $r=.58$ ). When analyzed in terms of sub-factors, a positive and moderate level significant relationship was found between positive attitude and intrinsic motivation ( $r=.68$ ) and attainment ( $r=.37$ ), and a positive and low significant relationship was found between extrinsic motivation ( $r=.17$ ). Based on these findings, it can be said that as students' perceived school experiences increase, their positive attitudes and motivation towards the social studies course also increase.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A school is an educational institution opened for a country to realize its goals in the field of education. The aim of contemporary education is to develop the individual in all aspects and to ensure that he/she is beneficial to society. When we consider that individuals spend between 12-16 years, i.e. important years of their lives at school, we can see how important school life is for all individuals. The positive progress of students' school life positively affects their attitudes, motivation and academic achievement (Baytemir et al., 2015).

The results of the study showed that gender did not have any effect on students' perceived school experiences, attitudes and motivation towards social studies course. In terms of perceived school experiences, there are different results in the studies in the literature. According to previous studies, male and female students have similar perceptions in terms of perceived school experiences (Smith, 2020; Somoğlu, & Yazici, 2021; Yavrutürk et al., 2020). On the other hand, Güler (2019) and Yeşilgöz Şengün (2023) found a significant difference in favor of girls. In addition, Uysal and Dogruöz (2023) found no significant difference according to gender in academic press and academic motivation scores in students' perceived school experiences but found a difference in favor of girls in the school connectedness dimension. Besides, our results regarding the effect of gender on attitude and motivation towards social studies course were supported by studies on attitude (Ergin, 2006; Ilgaz, 2018; Oğur, 2009; Özkal, 2013a; Şimşek, & Demir, 2012; Tosun, & Nalçacı, 2023; Yilmazer, & Demir, 2014) and motivation (Tünkler, 2019a). However, there are also studies in the literature that reveal that motivation differs according to gender (Arcagök, 2016; Özkal, 2013b; Tosun, & Nalçacı, 2023).

Another finding of the study is that as the grade level increases, students' perceived school experiences and motivation towards social studies course decrease. Students' attitudes towards social studies did not differ according to grade level. Some studies on perceived school experiences (Yavrutürk et al., 2020; Yeşilgöz Şengün, 2023) and motivation (Özkal, 2013b; Tünkler, 2019a, 2021) are in line with our results. However, in Güler's (2019) study, students' perceived school experiences did not change according to grade level. On the other hand, our results related to attitude were similar to (Yilmazer, & Demir, 2014) or different from previous studies (Ergin, 2006; Özkal, 2013a). In Coşkun and Samancı's (2012) study, the results that there is no difference between students' emotional and cognitive attitudes towards social studies course according to grade level, but there is a difference between behavioral attitudes support our study.

In the study, it was determined that academic achievement did not have any effect on students' perceived school experiences and positive attitudes towards social studies course. In contrast to our study, in studies examining the effect of academic achievement on students' perceived school experiences, it was determined that there was a significant difference in students' perceived school experiences (Uysal, & Dođruöz, 2023; Yeşilgöz Şengün, 2023) and attitudes towards social studies course in terms of academic achievement (Coşkun, & Samancı, 2012; Ergin, 2006; Gezer, 2016; Şener, 2021; Tay, & Akyürek Tay, 2006; Yilmazer, & Demir, 2014). In our study, it was revealed that as academic achievement increases, students' motivation towards social studies course also increases. This finding coincides with the studies in the literature. In his study, Tünkler (2019a) found that students with high social studies course achievement had higher motivation than those with low achievement. Similarly, Arcagök (2016) revealed that academic achievement has a significant effect on motivation for social studies course.

In the study, a significant positive relationship was found between students' perceived school experiences and their attitudes and motivation towards social studies course. It was understood that as students' perceived school experiences increased, their attitudes and motivation towards social studies course also increased. In their study, Uysal and Dogruöz (2023) found a moderate level and positive relationship between students' perceived school experiences and their attitudes towards geometry. Although we did not encounter a study that directly or indirectly revealed the relationship between perceived school experiences and social studies course, the role of students' school experiences on academic motivation has been expressed by different researchers (Bergin, 1992; Pallak et al., 1982). Finally, it was found that there was moderate level and positive significant relationship between students' attitudes towards the social studies course and their motivation. Subasi's (2023) study examining the predictive power of 6th grade students' attitude towards social studies course on their motivation to participate in this course supports this result. It was found that students' attitude towards social studies was a significant predictor of their motivation levels.

This study has some limitations. The fact that the participants of the study were middle school students living in the center of a single province prevents a comprehensive evaluation. In future studies, research involving students studying in different provinces can be conducted and findings with high generalization power can be obtained. There is no other study in the literature that reveals the relationship between middle school students' perceived school experiences and their attitudes and motivation towards social studies course. The research can be supported by comparing the results obtained in future studies.

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