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# Determining Social Sciences Teachers' Views for Specific Days and Weeks in the Distance Education Period: A Mixed Method Study

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## Abstract

In the study, it was aimed to determine the opinions of social studies teachers in distance education for specific days and weeks. An explanatory sequential pattern, one of the mixed method designs, was used. The quantitative sample consists of 204 social studies teachers. 112 of the teachers are women and 92 are men. The qualitative study group consists of 14 teachers selected from the quantitative sample. The quantitative data collection tool is the "Opinions of Social Studies Teachers on Benefiting from Specific Days and Weeks in Raising Social Responsibility Awareness." The scale was developed by Yazıcı, Koca and Dönmez (2017). Qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. Data were collected by e-mail. IBM SPSS 24.0 package program was used in the analysis of the data. Qualitative data were analyzed with content analysis. No difference was found in the variables of gender, age and professional seniority of teachers for specific days and weeks. In terms of school type, a difference was found in favor of teachers working in primary schools. It was found that teachers mostly used expression, presentation and question-answer techniques. It was determined that the importance of the day could not be grasped by the students. The attendance to the lessons was low and this was due to digital reasons. Teachers suggested an increase in digital support and sharing platforms.

**Keywords:** Special days and weeks, social studies, teachers' opinions.

## 1. Introduction

Schools are institutions that constitute the basic building blocks of social education. In these institutions, science and social sciences are taught to students. Behaviors that will bring the individual to the benefit of society and make the individual active in social life are also acquired in these institutions. Achieving the goals of the school is possible by considering the school culture as a whole. This integrity is norms, ethical behaviors, values, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, physical features, symbols and stories (Blandford, 2006; Balcı, 2014). Today, what is expected of students is to absorb what they have learned at school and to apply them in real life. For this

reason, education to be carried out only within the boundaries of the school cannot meet the expectations of the society. Because students need to be active in learning and learn by doing and experiencing. The most basic strategy of education is to associate students' social life with the subjects they learn. Contemporary teaching programs also act with this strategy. In addition to the compulsory courses that students must learn, they include social and cultural activities (Tokcan & Topkaya, 2015).

Social and cultural activities within this scope are held on specific days and weeks in our country. Specific days and weeks are the body language of the societies they belong to. They are the elements that complement the national and traditional structure of the society. It is possible to experience sadness while being very happy on these specific days and weeks. With these emotions, events, customs, rituals and memories in the past come to the fore. This situation contributes to the formation of social unity and integrity. The meaning and importance of specific days and weeks and the days determined by the education system are symbolized. With the activities to be carried out, values related to the meaning and importance of that day are emphasized. The students' attention focuses on a specific topic. The importance of the subject is grasped. It is ensured that they gain experience with activities performed for all levels. Students gain positive emotions and behavior. Thus, the awareness of social and cultural duty is created (Şiringel, 2006: 16; Karapınar & Alp, 2019) This awareness gives students dynamism. Of course, all these affect students' other lessons positively.

Specific days and weeks in our country were included as additional units in the 1968 Primary School Program for the first time. It is included as a separate activity in the Educational Studies Regulation in 1976. In 1986, it was stated that specific days and weeks would be held in "Life Studies" class in 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades and in 4th and 5th grades in "Social Studies" class. It was stated that specific days and weeks would be celebrated in the 1998 Primary Education Program within the Life Studies lesson in the 1., 2., 3. grade and in the Social Studies lesson in the 4., 5., 6., 7. grade. In November 2005 "Ministry of National Education Primary and Secondary Education Institutions Social Activities Regulation" was put into practice (Çınar, 2012, p. 25). Today, specific days and weeks are carried out in accordance with the "Ministry of National Education Primary and Secondary Education Institutions Social Activities Regulation." The aim of the regulation is to develop self-confidence and sense of responsibility in individuals. It is the acquisition of national, spiritual, moral and cultural values by creating new areas of interest (Ministry of National Education, Educational Institutions Social Activities Regulation, 2021).

Social studies course enables the individual to take his place in the society. Its subjects are people, people's life, their environment and social life. Effective citizenship skills and social understanding are gained. Students do not memorize information. They learn the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary in their lives in a connected way (Yazıcı, Uslu, & Arık, 2016). Social studies course is a course that covers specific days and weeks. In the Social Studies Curriculum (2018: 10), emphasis is placed on the development of historical sensitivity and national consciousness with specific days and weeks. National and religious holidays, local liberation and celebration days, and the teaching of important events are carried out in this context. Specific day and week activities are prepared by the teachers and the school administration. Achieving the goals of the activities depends on being well-planned and organized. Students' interests and abilities should be taken into account in the activities. The subjects are expected to be told in a non-artificial way. Thus, students are given responsibility and they socialize with specific days and weeks. It is ensured that the students adapt to the society, recognize their own selves, and exhibit democratic behaviors.

Covid-19 Coronavirus emerged in China in December 2019 and spread all over the world. Due to the spread, the World Health Organization has declared a pandemic. The pandemic has affected all areas of life around the world. Educational activities are one of the areas most affected by the pandemic. Face-to-face education was suspended in our country on March 13, 2020. As of March 23, 2020, emergency distance education started. In the fall semester of 2020, education started gradually and in smaller classes. Due to the epidemic, distance education started on 23 November 2020 and continued until the end of the semester (Yamamoto & Altun, 2020; Akyavuz & Çakın, 2020). In the spring semester of 2020-2021, distance education has continued in smaller classes. Teachers have played a key role in the distance education process. Teachers' views on distance education activities will guide future educational activities. The purpose of this research is to determine if the

opinions of social studies teachers on specific days and weeks in the distance education period. For this purpose, answers were sought for the following sub-goals:

- 1-Do social studies teachers' views on specific days and weeks differ according to their gender, age and professional seniority in the distance education period?
- 2- What are the methods and techniques they use on specific days and weeks in the distance education period?
- 3- What are the difficulties teachers experience in the distance education period in terms of specific days and weeks?
- 4- What should be done to increase the effectiveness of specific days and weeks in the distance education period?

## 2. Method

### Research Model

Explanatory sequential design, one of the mixed method designs, was used in the study. In the first stage of this design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed. In the second stage, qualitative data are collected and analyzed. Qualitative results are used to explain the quantitative results. Thus, the subject under investigation is understood in more detail and comprehensively (Creswell & Clark-Plano, 2007). In this direction, the quantitative dimension of the research was arranged in accordance with the general scanning model. The aim of this model is to reach a general judgment about the universe in a universe with many elements. For this purpose, scanning is performed on the whole universe or on a sample taken from the universe (Karasar, 2011). The qualitative dimension of the research is designed as a case study. In the research, descriptive case study type was used. This type answers why and how questions about a situation (Kaleli Yılmaz, 2014).

### Working group

Participants from whom quantitative data were collected in the study were determined by criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Teachers' volunteerism and high expression potential were taken as criteria. In this context, 204 social studies teachers working under the Niğde Provincial Directorate of National Education were determined. 112 of the teachers are women and 92 are men. The qualitative study group of the research consists of 14 teachers in the quantitative study group. Teachers were determined with maximum diversity sampling from purposeful sampling types. In the research, it was aimed to find and define the themes that contain differences (Patton, 2014). For this reason, teachers' graduate education, age, gender, and the school they work in were taken into account. At the point of research ethics, the names of the participants were not used directly. Teachers are numbered and coded between K1 and K14. They were named with these codes in the research.

### Data Collection Tools and Data Collection

In the study, as a quantitative data collection tool, "Opinions of Social Studies Teachers about Benefiting from Specific Days and Weeks in Raising Social Responsibility Awareness" scale was used. Semi-structured interview form was used as a qualitative data collection tool.

**Social Studies Teachers' Views on Benefiting from Specific Days and Weeks in Raising Social Responsibility Awareness:** The scale was developed by Yazıcı, Koca, and Dönmez (2017). The scale consists of 23 items. There are options that show the level of each item. Options have a value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 points. Negative items were scored in reverse.

Table 1: Cronbach-Alpha Internal Consistency Number for the Scale

		Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Benefiting from Specific Days and Weeks	Student Outcomes	.69	10
	Value Education	.84	5
	Teaching Program	.78	4
	Teaching Material	.88	4
	Total	.90	23

Table 1 contains findings regarding the Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficients for the scale. Yazıcı, Koca, and Dönmez (2017) found the internal consistency coefficient for the overall scale as .85. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient for the total of the scale was found to be .90.

**Semi-Structured Interview Form:** Qualitative data were collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. There are 3 open-ended questions in the form. The relevant literature was scanned in order to ensure the content validity of the form. The prepared questions were presented in the opinion of two field experts and two teachers. The necessary corrections were made with the feedback received, and the form was finalized.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data were collected through an open-ended e-mail interview form. E-mail interview form is a data collection tool that adapts to scanning approaches. It provides an advantage compared to face-to-face interview during the pandemic period. It facilitates access to participants in different places. It also reduces the cost of the study (Hamarat, 2014; Çepni, Kılcan, & Palaz, 2019). In this context, data were collected from 14 teachers working in 8 different schools. The teachers who participated in the quantitative study were informed about the study via e-mail. A form was sent to the volunteers among the teachers who replied the e-mails. The teachers' questions were answered via phone and e-mail. The obtained data were analyzed according to the descriptive analysis method. In descriptive analysis, the data are summarized and interpreted according to the determined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Direct quotations are included to ensure the validity of the research. An expert researcher helped to ensure reliability.

Quantitative data were collected via e-mail. IBM SPSS 24.0 package program was used in the analysis of the data. The level of significance in the analyzes was taken as  $p \leq .05$ . Normal distribution analyzes were made on the research data. Average score, minimum, maximum score width, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were calculated with this analysis. Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was performed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). As a result of the test, it was concluded that the distribution was not normal. For this reason, in analyzing the data belonging to the sub-problems, analyzes were performed with Independent Samples t-Test and One-Way ANOVA test. The data regarding the normality test of the scale are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Skewness and Kurtosis Table of the scale data

	Skewness	
	s	ss
Benefiting from Specific Days and Weeks	-.193	.170
	Kurtosis	
	s	ss
	-.170	.339

In Table 2, Skewness and Kurtosis values are between +1 and -1. This range shows that the distribution of the scale is normal. Thus, parametric tests were used in the analyzes performed.

## Findings and Comments

### 1. Findings About Sub-Problem

Table 3: Independent t-Test Results of Mean Scale for the Gender Variable

Factor	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	t	P
Student Outcomes	Woman	112	39.06	5.64	202	.107	.915
	Male	92	38.98	5.48			
Value Education	Woman	112	20.57	3.35	202	.163	.871
	Male	92	20.65	3.73			
Teaching Program	Woman	112	14.95	3.25	202	1.215	.226
	Male	92	15.52	3.50			
Teaching Material	Woman	112	13.29	4.18	202	.686	.493
	Male	92	13.71	4.37			
Total	Woman	112	87.88	13.54	202	.498	.619
	Male	92	88.86	14.60			

Table 3 contains Independent Samples t-Test results. According to the table, for the factors, namely, student attainment of the gender variable ( $t_{(202)} = .107$ ;  $p > .05$ ), value education ( $t_{(202)} = .163$ ;  $p > .05$ ), curriculum ( $t_{(202)} = 1.215$ ;  $p > .05$ ), teaching material ( $t_{(202)} = .686$ ;  $p > .05$ ) and the overall scale ( $t_{(202)} = 1.215$ ;  $p > .05$ ), it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference. It can be said that the gender variable does not have an effect on the opinions about the scale.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Results of Scale Data Regarding Age Variable

Factor		Sum of Squares	df	Average of Squares	F	p
Student Outcomes	Between Groups	19.368	3	6.456	.207	.892
	Within Groups	6249.510	200	31.248		
	Total	6268.877	203			
Value Education	Between Groups	19.368	3	6.456	.383	.765
	Within Groups	6249.510	200	31.248		
	Total	6268.877	203			
Teaching Program	Between Groups	17.163	3	5.721	.500	.682
	Within Groups	2286.190	200	11.431		
	Total	2303.353	203			
Teaching Material	Between Groups	19.184	3	6.395	.349	.790
	Within Groups	3665.738	200	18.329		
	Total	3684.922	203			
Total	Between Groups	94.125	3	31.375	.158	.924
	Within Groups	39698.165	200	198.491		
	Total	39792.289	203			

According to Table 4, in the opinions of social studies teachers regarding the age variable of the scale; for the following factors, namely, student learning outcomes ( $F_{(3-200)} = .207$ ;  $p > .05$ ), value education ( $F_{(3-200)} = .383$ ;  $p > .05$ ), curriculum ( $F_{(3-200)} = .500$ ;  $p > .05$ ), teaching material ( $F_{(3-200)} = .349$ ;  $p > .05$ ) and in the overall scale ( $F_{(3-200)} = .158$ ;  $p > .05$ ), a statistically significant difference was not found. It can be said that the age variable does not have an effect on the opinions about the scale.

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA Results of Scale Data Regarding Occupational Seniority Variable

Factor		Sum of Squares	sd	Average of Scores	F	p
Student Outcomes	Between Groups	64.195	4	16.049	.515	.725
	Within Groups	6204.682	199	31.179		
	Total	6268.877	203			
Value Education	Between Groups	24.186	4	6.046	.484	.748
	Within Groups	2486.441	199	12.495		
	Total	2510.627	203			
Teaching Program	Between Groups	12.720	4	3.180	.276	.893
	Within Groups	2290.633	199	11.511		
	Total	2303.353	203			
Teaching Material	Between Groups	94.135	4	23.534	1.304	.270
	Within Groups	3590.787	199	18.044		
	Total	3684.922	203			
Total	Between Groups	565.135	4	141.284	.717	.581
	Within Groups	39227.154	199	197.121		
	Total	39792.289	203			

According to Table 5, professional seniority variable in social studies teachers' opinions about the scale; for the following factors, namely, student learning outcomes ( $F_{(3-200)} = .515$ ;  $p > .05$ ), value education ( $F_{(3-200)} = .484$ ;  $p > .05$ ), curriculum ( $F_{(3-200)} = .276$ ;  $p > .05$ ), teaching material ( $F_{(3-200)} = 1.304$ ;  $p > .05$ ) and in the overall scale ( $F_{(3-200)} = .717$ ;  $p > .05$ ), there was no statistically significant difference. It can be said that the professional seniority variable does not have an effect on the opinions about the scale.

Table 6: Independent t-Test Results for Scale Data Regarding School Type Variable

Factor	School Type	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	t	P
Student Outcomes	Primary	57	40.70	5.22	202	2.727	.007*
	Middle	147	38.37	5.57			
Value Education	Primary	57	21.72	3.02	202	2.860	.005*
	Middle	147	20.18	3.61			
Teaching Program	Primary	57	16.35	3.34	202	3.086	.002*
	Middle	147	14.76	3.28			
Teaching Material	Primary	57	15.12	4.57	202	3.524	.001
	Middle	147	12.84	3.97			
Total	Primary	57	93.89	13.98	202	3.648	.000*
	Middle	147	86.16	13.44			

\* $p \leq .05$

According to Table 6, in the school type variable; for the following factors, namely, student learning outcomes ( $t_{(202)} = 2.727$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), value education ( $t_{(202)} = 2.860$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), curriculum ( $t_{(202)} = 3.086$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), teaching material ( $t_{(202)} = 3.524$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ) and in the overall scale ( $t_{(202)} = 3.648$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), it is seen that there is a statistically significant difference. This difference is in favor of primary school teachers. It can be said that they have views on value education, curriculum and teaching material.

## 2. Sub-Problem Results

Table 7: Methods Used by Teachers in Distance Education on Specific Days and Weeks

Methods and Techniques	f
Expression	7
Question answer	5
Case study	4
Presentation	5
Empathy	3
Research Review	3
Thinking Six Hats	1

According to the answers given, it was determined that the teachers mostly used the expression (7) technique. Question-answer (5), presentation (5), case study (4), empathy (3) research and investigation (3) and six thinking hats are other techniques they use. Teachers' views in this context are as follows: K3 "Although there were few students, I used the narration technique. I gave information in advance about the specific day I will commit the following week. I also told the students to do research. But I didn't get much feedback. I usually taught in the lessons." K12 "The continuation of specific days and weeks in distance education is an effective practice in order not to make students forget our important days and values. I think national holidays have been a bit enthusiastic. Most of my students hung our flag on their windows. We tried to empathize even remotely during the week of the disabled." K8 "Students should be informed about the importance of weeks on specific days during the live lesson. I tried to encourage students with activities they can do at home. They expressed their opinions about the meaning of the day from different perspectives using the six thinking hats technique.

## 3. Sub-Problem Results

Table 7: Problems Teachers Encounter in Distance Education on Specific Days and Weeks

Theme	f
Digital-Technical	5
Lack of Excitement	4
Absence of the Transfer of Emotions	5
Failure to Comprehend the Meaning and Importance of the Day	6
Low Participation	5
Keeping Subjects Abstract	3
Insufficient Time	4
Insufficient Teaching Value	3

In line with the answers given, the most common problems faced by teachers in distance education on specific days and weeks are the inability to comprehend the meaning and importance of the day (6), digital-technical (5), lack of enough participation (5) and lack of emotion transfer. Other problems are lack of excitement (4), insufficient time (4), subjects remain abstract (3) and insufficient value teaching (3). Teachers' views in this context are as follows: K9 "One of the main problems is the low attendance at the classes. Students fall behind on topics. Of course, I have students who do not have tablets, internet or share their belongings with their siblings. Emotions were not experienced as intense as in face-to-face training." K6: "Completing the curriculum



on time, the problem of participating in distance education by students, being unable to come together at any time outside of the course have restricted the work to be done on specific days and weeks." K4 "Students often get bored while listening and the subjects remain abstract. It lacked the spirit of celebration. I encountered the problem that it was more difficult to understand by the students.

#### 4. Sub-Problem Results

Table 8: Teachers' Solution Suggestions for the Problems Experienced in Distance Education in Specific Days and Weeks

Theme	f
Cooperation with Parents	3
Digital- Technical Support	4
Website	3
Online Sharing Platform	4
School Administration Support	2
Documentary	2
Live broadcast	4
Media	2

According to Table 8, it was determined that teachers suggested the following items, namely, digital-technical support (4), online sharing platform (4) and live broadcast (4) to solve their problems in distance education. Cooperation with parents (3), website (3), school administration support (2), documentary (2) and media (2) are other suggestions. Teachers' views in this context are as follows. K7 "We formed Whatsapp parent groups. Here, I gave information about the specific day I will process. I wanted them to do an activity. The indifference of some parents obviously upset me. " K14 "Websites, events and online information platforms that might attract the students' attention to the specific weeks are offered. These platforms need to be more. Especially for the children's age group. " K5 "In order to overcome the problems I encountered, I directed the students to research the subject and share what they learned with the family. I wanted them to look at the documentaries I suggested in their spare time."

#### 3. Results

Within the scope of the scale applied in the study, no significant difference was found in the variables of gender, age and professional seniority. In the school type variable, a difference was found in favor of teachers working in primary schools. Yazıcı, Koca, and Dönmez (2017) found difference in favor of female teachers in terms of student outcomes. They also found that male teachers were more positive in the value education sub-dimension. Specific days and weeks contribute to the socialization of students, gaining traditions, customs, national and spiritual values, empathy, human rights and patriotism. They carry the bond they have gained with the roots of society into the future. It is possible to say within the scope of the study that the teachers act in line with this contribution, regardless of gender, age and seniority.

It was determined that the teachers mostly used the expression, question-answer and presentation techniques. These techniques do not require tools. In techniques; depiction, explanation and storytelling are used. The teacher is more active. Teachers' tone of voice, knowledge, speaking tempo, gestures are important. Students are encouraged to think about a specific subject (Saban, 2014). Therefore, it can be said that it is used in digital classrooms. Empathy must be established correctly in techniques. Real empathy is achieved through education. Teachers enter their students' inner worlds with empathy. This creates a safe and positive classroom environment, albeit digital. If students are not empathized, their focus on the meaning of the day and their motivation will not be realized. Because the values to be transferred are abstract concepts.

The findings show that students do not grasp the importance of specific days and weeks. Concepts are learned if they are modeled correctly in the student's mind. Cognition of the student is effective in modeling. Family,

environment, society, student's abilities, physical condition, needs and pre-concepts are also effective (Tokcan, 2015). Misunderstanding of these factors causes students to misunderstand. In distance education, the source and the receiver are in different environments. Learner and teacher interaction may be lost. Transferring the excitement in formal education to the digital environment is, of course, limited. Students can feel isolated. Drama, role play, travel, review, group conversation etc. are limited and less realized (Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020). This situation affects students affectively. Activities with more participation can be organized in order to understand and internalize the importance of the days. These events can be in the form of digital platforms, live broadcasts, online groups.

Digital-technical support and lack of time are among the biggest problems encountered in distance education. This situation is also negative in terms of equal opportunity. In the literature; Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020; Koç, 2020; Akbal & Akbal; Keskin & Özer Kaya, 2020; Serçemeli and Kurnaz (2020) also encountered similar findings in their research. Since it is assumed that the pandemic will prolong, these problems must be permanently solved. It is seen that the solutions suggested by teachers on this issue are of digital origin. Digital-technical support is performed by Ministry of Education, non-governmental organizations etc. (Ministry of Education, 2021). In the findings, teachers stated the cooperation between school administration and parents. The family atmosphere has a great effect on the meaning, excitement and feeling of the specific days. Children take their parents as models. It is important at this point for families to act consciously. School administrations take into account the feedback from teachers and parents during the pandemic period (Turan, 2020). At this point, on specific days, teachers should guide the administration in line with their needs.

#### 4. Discussion

The research is limited to social studies teachers. The opinions of the teachers of Turkish, Music, visual arts lessons where specific days and weeks are taught, as well as parents can be taken. Thus, arrangements can be made in line with the opinions of other partners. Specific days and weeks should be more affective. For this purpose, it is recommended to spread active platforms for teachers and students. Technical support for students should be increased. It is recommended that new criteria for specific days and weeks are determined by policy makers.

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