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## Trust Perception from the Eyes of Children

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**Abstract:** One adds meaning into his/her own life thanks to several values (reliance, respect, tolerance, benevolence, responsibility, justice, etc.). While the foundation of these values is laid at early ages, they might undergo several changes thanks to life experiences. Thus, the perceptions of the interviewee regarding that value are to be taken into consideration while teaching values. This study is assumed to raise awareness and to lead similar other studies. This study is in the form of a research article. The purpose of this qualitative research is to find out the views and opinions of students on trust values, taught in social sciences courses. In the research, the case study method was applied. The research was conducted in Zubeyde Hanim Primary School in Isparta, in the 2017-2018 academic year towards the end of the second semester on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd graders. Students differ in parents' education level, gender and age. In the study, data were collected by a semi-structured interview form. Four experts' opinions were consulted to ensure the reliability of the study. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and content analysis methods. According to the findings obtained, it is observed that students differ in trust values, desired to be acquired in social sciences courses, depending on grade level and gender. We may state the fact that the interaction of the child with his/her environment has been affecting the value of reliance since very early ages and that the meaning added into reliance might differ as the child gets older.

**Keywords:** Trust, family, value, value education.

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### Introduction

Trust is described in a variety of ways by scientists, and there has been a number of studies in this area. According to Rotter, trust is a general expectation on the belief that other people will fulfill what they promise (Lewis, 1985). Trust requires honesty and charity. In other words, if a person who has trust in somebody, is inconsistent with the other people, if s/he does not care for others, then the existence of trust becomes impossible. The desire to gain some benefits lies behind the trust of a person in the other (Dinc & Gastmas, 2013; Franktel, 2005; Mayer, 1995). When these benefits are provided, one believes that he will be in better condition. For this reason, confidence gives opportunities to do things that people cannot do on their own.

Trust is one of those concepts that are believed to be understood by almost everyone but are difficult to explain or identify (Taylor, 1989). Trust is defined as trust regarding another's aims, expectations, goodwill and words (Mayer, et al., 1995; Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998; Bigley & Pearce, 1998; Mckight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998; Deluga, 1994). The sense of trust begins with the person's self-confidence (Govier, 1993). A person who does not have self-confidence, s/he cannot express himself and be successful in spite of all the opportunities s/he has, since s/he is not aware of himself and his potential. Situations such as the fact that everybody has lied from childhood and that s/he has been constantly betrayed by the people s/he trusts cause the person to be cautious in approaching to people around him. Self-confident people, by not lying, keeping the promises they make and by protecting consignment, engrain trust in others. Love, respect, honesty and friendship have great importance in people's life; that is why the concept of "identity" decreases in people. One's self-confidence is shaped firstly by starting with his acceptance of himself and his borders and by listening to his inner voice (Flynn, 2007).

Self-confidence that is the foundation of trusting and to be trusted by others encompasses fundamental moral values of people and their determination in this regard. In order for a person to be credible, it is necessary for him to keep his promises, to show integrity, to have the competence and skill to perform a task, to be honest and responsible. In

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addition to this, having confidence in others can be described as a complex process depending on expectations, individual characteristics, world view, risks and interests (Baltas, 2000).

The most important element of trust is self-confidence. The sense of trust has positive feelings as courage, respect, love and self-worth, whereas distrust has negative feelings as fear, anxiety, sadness and dread.

The sense of trust is one of the important factors affecting people's lives. It is a guarantee of both our actions that we do and will do in the name of our society, our culture and our relationship with ourselves, our family, community and other people. The environment in which trust is formed, people around it, a culture based on common values, the way of people's lifestyles have great importance on developing confidence. It can be said that trust arises from the relationship with others in a natural process. In addition, the concept of trust also includes an emotional attachment that represents sincere affection (Wech, 2002).

The importance of trust for individuals and societies has been known for centuries. Authors and researchers study in these areas and indicate that the high level of trust in societies also increases the tendency of collaboration; ultimately collaboration is re-producing of confidence (Sargut, 2001). When we say that we trust a person or that someone is trustworthy, we imply that he or she will perform useful actions, and we think this fact is a sufficient condition for us to work together. Similarly, when we say that a person cannot be trusted, we imply that s/he is a person from whom will be stayed away (Fisman & Khanna, 1999).

Since 1950's, different dimensions of trust have begun to be revealed. For example, Strickland (1958) regarded philanthropy as one of the important dimensions of it. Hovland and Kelley (1953) also presented motivation as the most fundamental feature of trust. Sitkin and Roth (1993) defined the appropriateness dimension in 1990s.

Trust begins with the reactions shown to the mother in the mother's womb and continues with birth and when one comes to the age of the school, it develops and improves with the children's environment and surroundings. One trusts people according to his experiences gained throughout his life. Therefore, parents and educators, who aim to develop desired behavior and emotion, have started to give importance to values and education of values. It is proposed that indirectly conveyed values in education programs should be passed on directly to the students because of the need that was observed. For this reason, studies have been carried out in Turkey, and it has been aimed that some values will be conveyed to the students with the outcomes of units in the primary school education programs. There is a close relationship between education and social studies courses. The purpose of education is to ensure that the child is successful and has a positive attitude towards the environment (Binbasioglu, 2003). The ultimate goal of this course is to teach natural and social reality in which student lives, in accordance with his features of development.

The feeling of trust is initiated in family at young ages. Children first trust parents, and they learn to trust new people when they start school (friends, teachers, etc.). Once the trust is developed, one can make others feel respected, loved, tolerated in his relationships. The sense of trust is not values that can arise and disappear immediately. That's why, the sense of trust in children needs to be well placed. If their trust in people is damaged, their self-confidence will also get harmed, and over time they will become introvert and have issues in their relationships.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research is to reveal the meaning of the sense of "trust" which is one of the most important values taught in social sciences courses. In the Social Studies Curriculum which was prepared in 2005 the importance of family unity, being scientific, honesty (truth-reliability) were emphasized. These are the values included in the Social Studies Course (Tay et al., 2013). In this context, answers to the following questions were sought:

- Do students' opinions on trust change depending on gender?
- Do students' opinions on trust change depending on grade level?

### **Method**

#### *Research Design*

This case study designed as a qualitative research (Silverman, 2006). The reason why the case study method was applied is to obtain the opinions of students while they were observing and actually experiencing the situation. A case study can be defined as a detailed analysis of a single person, an environment, a type of document, and a case (Kazak, 2001; Yin, 2014).

Case study is a research method that studies a current phenomenon in its own environment when there is not an evident boundary line between the phenomenon and the environment in which it occurs, and where there are more than one evidence or data source (Creswell, 2007; Simsek & Yildirim, 2003; Yin, 2014). Case study is a way of observing what is happening in the environment, collecting data systematically, analyzing them and revealing the results. Outcome of the process is a clear-cut comprehension of why the case is so, and what it is needed to focus more through further researches. For that reason, case study method is more suitable to generate or reveal something rather than testing a hypothesis. In general, case study is the preferred method when questions arise about how, why and when the

researcher has little control over events (Yin, 2014). This research has been completed with a more positive attitude and willingly since students took place in the study and their views were gathered.

### Participants

The research was conducted in Zubeyde Hanim Primary School in Isparta, in 2017-2018 academic year towards the end of second semester on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Students differ in gender, age and educational level of their parents. Detailed information about the participants presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal Traits of Participants

Gender	Boy	Girl	
	65	62	
Grade Level	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade
	66	40	19

### Data Collection

In the study, data were collected through semi-structured interview forms. Semi-structured interview technique is more appropriate in educational science researches because it has a certain level of standard and also flexible features at the same time (Cepni, 2005; Ekiz, 2003; Karasar, 1998). In the process of preparation of the form, the relevant literature was first reviewed and interview questions were revealed to use in the pretreatment process. Opinions were obtained from four faculty members regarding the form and pre-treatment was carried out on 25 people, and the form was put into final form. As the pupils are at the primary school level, a detailed explanation was made to them. The semi-structured interviews ensure the interviewees to express the world s/he senses through his/her own viewpoints. The researcher is required to ask open-ended questions to be able to penetrate into this world. In such interviews, the questions are either to involve flexible sentences or the interview is to be conducted in variously structured techniques (Merriam, 2013).

The strategy which is used to increase the reliability of the research was clearly shown, and it is anticipated that it will allow other researchers to use the strategy in a similar way (Silverman, 2000, Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). External reliability of the research was ensured by reporting the steps that the researchers have followed, in detailed and in an obvious way; (Robson, 1999), and by trying to convince readers by showing the results through the researcher's point of view, and by presenting the some of the results as collected, the internal reliability was increased to a great extent (Turnuklu, 2001). In order to ensure the reliability of the study, 4 experts' opinions were consulted and the reliability of the research was determined by comparing the agreements and disagreements of the experts. The reliability of the research was determined using the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) (Reliability = agreements/agreements + disagreements). A 95% consensus (reliability) was provided in the reliability study carried out specifically for this study.

### Data Analysis

In the study, the data were analyzed using both descriptive and content analysis methods. In the descriptive analysis, opinions of students quoted directly without any amendment as obtained from the interview to present data in a realistic way. The data were described and interpreted in a logical, understandable way. As Yildirim and Simsek (2005) have stated, descriptive analysis has been carried out in four steps: 1.) setting of a framework for data analysis by means of research questions and dimensions from interview and/or observation, 2. processing of data according to this framework and choosing direct citations to be used when reporting results, identification of findings and organizing data, 3.) supporting them with direct quotations where necessary, and 4.) finally interpretation of findings and explanation of cause and effect relations between findings. Content analysis is based on the analysis of symbolic behaviors or communication materials (such as an author's books or articles, the content of TV broadcasts or films, the attitudes of readers or audiences towards these communication materials, etc.) rather than directly observing behaviors (Gokce, 2006; Falkingham & Reeves, 1998).

### Findings

In order to reveal the opinions of primary school students according to their age and gender, answers for the questions in the interview form were sought. The answers obtained from the interview forms are as follows:

Table 2. People Whom First Graders Trust

Creator	Boy	Frequency	Girl	Frequency
	Whom he trusts		Whom she trust	
	God	7	God	5
	Mother	8	Mother	15

<b>Created</b>	Father	10	Father	1
	Family (parents-siblings)	4	Family (parents-siblings)	12
	Teacher	2	Teacher	-
	Friend	2	Friend	-

When we look at Table 2, it was found that male students in the first grade generally trust their fathers (n = 10) and mothers (n = 8). Girls were found to trust their mothers (n = 15) and families (parents, siblings, etc.) (n = 12). Thus, first graders trust their families, parents. Since a new connection is just set up with the outside of the house, new people are met, first graders still have confidence in parents. Since parents brought them to the world and raise them, children have a tendency to trust their families.

Some of the answers of the interviewees for the question; "*Whom do you trust most in life? Why?*" as follows:

S.1: "*I trust mommy because she gave birth to me and took the responsibility of looking after me*".

S.2: "*I trust Mom and Dad because they feed, take care of and raise me*."

S.3: "*I trust my father because he protects our family*".

S.4: "*I trust God because God loves us very much*".

S.6: "*I trust Hakan because he respects me*."

S.7: "*I trust my older brother because he is very hardworking*".

When the answers given by the students are taken into consideration, it is seen that parents approach children with devotion, love and respect. Children feel responsible for their parents because they raised them. A child feels safe and gets to know himself thanks to the emotions and values conveyed to him by their parents. The fundamental feeling of trust develops in the family, matures and lasts throughout life. The interaction of individuals within the family determines the child's position in the family.

Table 3. People Whom Second Graders Trust

	<b>Boy</b>		<b>Girl</b>	
	Whom he trusts	Frequency	Whom she trust	Frequency
<b>Creator</b>	God	4	God	1
	Mother	8	Mother	10
	Father	2	Father	3
<b>Created</b>	Family (parents-siblings)	5	Family (parents-siblings)	14
	Teacher	1	Teacher	1
	Friend	-	Friend	1

When we look at Table 3, it is seen that second-grade male students trust their mothers (n = 8) and families (n = 5). Girls also trust their mothers (n = 10) and families (n = 4). This result shows that students still trust more their parents than the environment. The fact that parents love them without any expectation and take the responsibilities of them, causes children to trust their parents. It is important for children that parents protect their kids from any harm and keep their promises. Parents are still role-models for children. They take the effects of the relationship with the parents to school life and relations. The most important relationship of students is the one with parents (and this relationship is a vital one) (Gunalp, 2007).

Some of the answers of the interviewees for the question; "*Whom do you trust most in life? Why?*" as follows:

S.1: "*I trust mommy because they trust us*".

S.2: "*I trust Melisa, my favorite friend, because she is my relative*".

S.3: "*I trust my father because he always keeps his promises*".

S.4: "*I trust God because he knows everything*"

S.5: "*Mommy because she does not want anything brings me evil*"

S.6: "*Daddy because he protects me from every danger*"

S.7: "*I trust my parent, because some people kidnap children*"

S.8: "*I trust Efe and Hakan because they are my blood brothers*"

According to the answers given by the students, having trust in mothers is higher. However, they have also started to build trust with people around them, depending on the communication with them. Family is at the forefront regarding trust because this age group think that confidence in parents is steady and lasting.

Table 4. People Whom Third Graders Trust

	Boy		Girl	
	Whom he trusts	Frequency	Whom she trust	Frequency
<b>Creator</b>	God	1	God	-
	Mother	2	Mother	2
	Father	1	Father	3
<b>Created</b>	Family (parents-siblings)	3	Family (parents-siblings)	4
	Teacher	-	Teacher	-
	Friend	3	Friend	-

According to Table 4, 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade male students trust their families (n = 3) and friends (n = 3). Girls were found to have trust in their families (n = 4) and their fathers (n = 3). It is seen that boys started to trust people around them, whereas girls continue to trust their parents. Because of gender roles given to males, they are more social. However, girls are more cautious and timid in their relationship with the environment. Trust is a dynamic structure in the individual and social life of children because people can change their relationships due to trust or lack of trust (Solomon and Flores, 2001). It seems that boys start to build trust with people, who are not a family member.

Some of the answers of the interviewees for the question; "Whom do you trust most in life? Why?" as follows:

S.1: "I trust Muharrem, friend of mine. He never tells the secrets I tell him.

S.2: "I trust Enes, friend of mine because he keeps secrets, my parents trust him and he is a good person".

S.3: "I trust my family because I trust them more than others"

S.4: "I trust mommy because she gave birth to me, she loves, embraces, kisses me and does ironing and cooks for me".

S.5: "I trust my mother and father because they have always taken care of me, they raised me and I never undergo a lack of trust by them, so I trust them very much".

S.6: "I trust my father because he is the oldest of our house".

S.7: "I trust Allah because Allah is the greatest."

S.8: "I trust Seher, my brother's wife, because she never lies".

According to the answers given, the students now have started to trust the people who are not their family members. As the grade level gets higher, the communication with and having trust in the environment naturally increases. Children trust their peers, friends, and they start to share with them. According to the answers given by the students, trust is a feeling that is formed over time and doesn't disappear easily. Trust is a concept that takes place at every moment of our lives and helps us to be in a relationship and collaboration with people. People live and hold on life by trusting each other. Concepts such as love, respect, understanding, tolerance cannot exist in an environment that is not trustworthy. A sense of trust should be conveyed to people at young ages to provide a happier, respectful, lovely and tolerant lifestyle.

### Conclusion

The research was conducted in order to reveal the opinions of primary school students (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders) about trust values to be taught within social sciences courses and the following results were found out as results of the findings obtained from the interview forms:

One adds meaning into his/her own life thanks to several values (reliance, respect, tolerance, benevolence, responsibility, justice, etc.). While the foundation of these values is laid at early ages, they might undergo several changes thanks to life experiences. Thus, the perceptions of the interviewee regarding that value are to be taken into consideration while teaching values. Hence, teaching the value without consideration of the understanding of that value and without appreciating what that value means to that person will be useless. Once we have reviewed the literature, we have not been able to come up with such a study. Thus, this study is assumed to raise awareness and to lead similar other studies.

In the early years, children trust their parents (parents-siblings) more. Family is the first social environment that children encounter. The child learns how to communicate with family members and other people by observing the attitudes, behaviors and reactions in the family (Gunalp, 2007). Family is always at the forefront for children since they know that parents do not harm them, they brought them to the world, and they raised and take care of them.

A healthy individual grows up in a trustworthy environment and learns to trust himself and others in the future. According to the answers of the students, in the years when the elementary school started, they trust their families and

do not to the people around them in their social environment. Children feel vulnerable to surroundings because they are at very young ages and the people around them are strangers. Especially, girls are more introverted and timid in their relationship with others than boys. That is why female students trust people hardly or they don't trust at all.

The child seeks a role-model for himself as a social individual and finds it in the family. The first role-models are parents (Kirkincioglu, 2003). Support from students' parents has a significant positive impact on their academic success and self-confidence (Borekci & Uyangor, 2018). Primary school students seem to trust only their mothers or fathers. Connection and intimacy are deeper between mothers and kids (students), who trust just their mothers. The mother is the first person with whom the child communicates. In the first year of their lives, children's psycho-social task is to learn to trust. The feeling of trust between the baby and her mother is the basis of future interpersonal relationships. Mother's being able to meet the needs of the baby appropriately and on time and eliminate the baby's troubles and understand their nonverbal language form the basis for mutual understanding and trust between the mother and the baby (Yavuzer, 1995).

Thus, children's tendency to trust just their mother is due to their deep and strong relationship with their mothers. The fact that children see their fathers as heroes, they think of them as protection from evil, and male students' admiration of their fathers tell us the reason why they trust just their fathers. Sons want to be like their fathers and act like them. There is nobody who is stronger, more skillful, more intelligent and superior than his father in the world. It is an important source of trust for the child to identify himself with a strong father (Gunalp, 2007). Students who only trust their fathers, place at the forefront of this opinion.

The trust that develops by the messages conveyed by the family in the first years is reinforced with other people such as teachers and friends when they start going to school (Ozbey, 2004). In the following years, they build trust with friends and teachers because they get into touch and acquainted with the environment, people around them. They show their love to people they trust, they treat them respectfully, they give presents, help, do favors, and they stay by their side. Trust is a vital feeling that takes place in every moment of our lives, no matter we are infants, children, juveniles, adults or elders.

### Discussion

Trust is never a thing that can appear and disappear at one stroke, and never a thing that can last forever. This means that sense of trust should be well-fostered in children. As students lose trust in people around them, they lose self-confidence. Thus, their relationship with people gets worse, and they become introverts. Trust is among the basic emotions of great importance in interpersonal relationships (Asunakutlu, 2002).

When there is a lack of trust among spouses, among children and parents in the family or among friends, nothing goes well and the desired way. In this case, the relationship between people turns into an ordinary one, life becomes routine, people behave in abstinent way towards each other. Then, material and immaterial gains come to an end (Mert, 2012).

If one person trusts another person, she finds the trustee's behaviours reliable. This is easily observed in students. A child starts to share something with his teachers and friends. She shares events in her life, situations and dreams with her friends. One person can have a positive expectation from another person and be sensitive to the expectation only by means of trust. In addition, trust also includes an emotional attachment that represents a sincere affection for people (Wech, 2002). Humane feelings such as humility, loyalty, tolerance, justice, courage, patience, honor, diligence and simplicity convey reliability to children.

In a changing and developing social structure of us, the point of view towards values can change over time and new perceptions on values can emerge. This situation increases the importance of researches on values all the more (Aladag, 2009; Akbas, 2004; Cengelci, 2010; Gunduz, 2014; Keskin, 2008; Tahiroglu, 2011; Ulger, 2012; Ulusoy, 2007; Uzunkol, 2014, Yigittir, 2009). Trust values are also changing and evolving over time.

As a result, in this study, it was researched how trust affects students, whom they trust most considering the criteria such as gender and age, how they trust and what is needed to gain it. Trust is a very important feeling both in scientific literature and in life. That is why, parents and teachers need to teach children the importance of trust in life for themselves and their relationship their importance in terms of their own, their importance in relation to them, in order to bring a sense of trust to our children in a healthy and conscious way. Trust is important for people to live happily and successfully.

We may state the fact that the interaction of the child with his/her environment has been affecting the value of reliance since very early ages and that the meaning added into reliance might differ as the child gets older.

This study is limited with the views of Isparta and primary school students. It is also limited by a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher. In this study on children's perception of trust, social scientists on childhood understanding has developed a more child-centered approach to childhood. To this approach According to them, children are social actors with their own unique feelings, thoughts and interests; the decision-making mechanisms of children and their own well-being. They must take active roles in its formation, Occupational Rights should be taken,

they should be given the opportunity to participate, detailed physical and social life monitoring should be improved and will oversee other requirements.

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