

VIEWS AND ATTITUDES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS LIFE STUDIES TEACHING

Abstract: This study aimed to determine the primary school teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching and their views about the teaching process. The study was conducted using the convergent parallel mixed design. The participants were 209 primary school teachers working in the central district of Uşak. In the study, the quantitative data were collected via the Life Studies Teaching Attitude Scale developed by Sarıkaya, Özgöl and Yılar (2017). The scale was administered online (Google forms). The qualitative data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The findings obtained via the scale showed that the primary school teachers had high levels of attitudes towards the life studies course. Similarly, the qualitative findings demonstrated that the teachers expressed positive opinions about life studies teaching. From the gender perspective, the male teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching were higher than those of the female teachers. The teachers working in schools with low socio-economic level had lower attitudes towards life studies teaching than those working in schools with medium and high socio-economic levels. The interviews revealed that the scope of the course was very wide, which caused the teachers to have difficulty in presenting the subject. Lastly, the study highlighted problems arising from parents such as being a wrong role-model, ignoring the course, and not paying attention to values or education at home.

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INTRODUCTION

Life studies aims to equip children with good attitudes and behaviours (Deveci, 2008) and gives them the characteristics of being a good person and a world citizen (Tay, 2017). It has an important place in primary school curricula. Life studies teaches natural and social environment in a holistic manner (Baymur, 1937). The course is designed using a collective teaching approach and aims to provide basic skills and habits (Gültekin, 2015) to have happy individuals (Ministry of National Education, 2009). In this context, the foundations for students to develop a certain value system and participate in social life in society are laid in life studies courses. (Belet, 1999). Life studies teaches the necessary knowledge, skills and values to help students adapt themselves to the society.

The foundations of life studies are based on Plato and Aristotle (Brückl, 1932). Comenius is known as the founder of the life studies course, and the ideas of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart and Dewey about education and children are effective in shaping and developing the core principles of the course (Baymur, 1937; Bektaş, 2009; Brückl, 1932; Karabağ, 2009). In Turkey, life studies was first included in the primary school curriculum in 1926. The related curricula developed after the Republic aimed to integrate all other primary school courses into the life studies course. Therefore, the course has a pivotal role today (Ministry of National Education, 1936; Arslan, 2000; Salı and Arslan, 2000). Since the 1926 Primary School Curriculum, the life studies course, which is regarded as the pivot lesson, has been given greater weight than the other lessons. It is because it serves as the foundation for the second semester courses (Sabancı & Şahin, 2005). It has a unique value and role in shaping children's life and is thus distinguished from other courses in a curriculum.

The attitudes and behaviors of teachers in the classroom have a significant impact on student achievement

(Çengelci-Köse, 2015). What the teacher does and does not do in the classroom has a direct impact on the students' learning levels. The majority of the topics covered in the life studies course are relevant to daily life and help children develop in a variety of ways. The social-emotional and moral development of children is influenced by teacher behavior. The character, personality, daily life, routines, and behaviors of the teacher have an impact on all levels of student development. The following are the roles of the teacher in a life studies course (Ministry of National Education, 2009):

- Cooperates with the family.
- Helps students to acquire skills and personal qualities.
- Facilitates personal, social and cultural education.
- Measures and evaluates the development of children in the learning process.
- Takes individual differences into consideration while organizing in-class activities.
- Plans the instruction.
- Ensures that students are health and safe.
- Guides students to work in a collaboration.
- Collaborates with colleagues.
- Guides student when they study.

The teacher's roles and responsibilities in life studies courses allow for the creation of effective learning environments. It assists students in getting the most out of the course. The issues that teachers should pay attention to during their teaching are explained in detail in the 2018 Life Studies Course Curriculum. The curriculum emphasized the importance of teachers engaging in in-school and out-of-school practices, taking into account students individual differences, and establishing a link between school and life. Furthermore, it was stated that values and basic life skills should be linked to accomplishments (Ministry of National Education, 2018). As a result, teachers have a wide range of duties and responsibilities when it comes to teaching a life

studies course. One of the primary responsibilities of teachers is to fulfill these requirements. As a result, they contribute to the course's effective teaching.

Primary school teachers have a key role in pursuing the mission of the life studies course and achieving the related learning outcomes. As a matter of fact, teachers' views about a course are very important in the context of the teaching-learning process (Özkal, Güngör & Çetingöz, 2004). What teachers like and appreciate or what they feel about teaching course has an important effect on students (Mensah & Kurancie, 2013). Teachers affects students behavior negatively or positively by their behaviors, by their attitudes towards their occupation and by their personalities (Morina & Kervan, 2018). Considering the fact that primary school students learn mostly through observation and modelling, the behavioral tendencies and attitudes of primary school teachers in the course are the primary source of learning for students. Teachers' attitudes and behaviours shape students' individual and personality development, and home environment is influenced by family background, socio-economic level, beliefs and education environments (Bhargava & Pathy, 2014). There is a consensus in the literature that teachers' attitudes towards teaching are highly correlated with their achievement in teaching (Latchanna & Dagneu, 2009). Studies on teacher attitudes towards life studies teaching demonstrate that teacher attitudes are at a high level (Yurtbakan & Altun, 2019; Çetin, 2020). Accordingly, the positive attitude of the primary school teacher towards life studies teaching increases the academic success of the students and enables them to enjoy the lesson. Determining teachers' attitudes and opinions regarding life studies teaching is important in terms of drawing attention to the importance of the course identifying and eliminating the problems in the teaching-learning process, determining the needs of primary school teachers and students in relation to the life studies course. The attitudes of primary school teachers towards the life studies course are directly related to students' being effective and equipped citizens in their society. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the primary school teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching and their opinions about the teaching process. This study tried to find answers to the following questions.

- What are the attitudes of primary school teachers towards life studies teaching?
 - Do the primary school teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching differ according to gender and socio-economic level of the school?
- What are primary school teachers' views about teaching the life studies course?

METHOD

This study aimed to determine teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching and their views about the teaching process. The study was carried out using the convergent parallel mixed design. Mixed method uses qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis together (Creswell, 2005). Convergent parallel mixed design necessitates that qualitative and quantitative data are collected and combined at the same time (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Therefore, in order to determine the teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching and their views about the teaching process, qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time, and the findings were presented by merging them.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the study were 209 primary school teachers working in the central district of Uşak. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Participants

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	117	56%
	Male	92	44%
Work experience	One year to 10 years	20	9.5%
	Between 11 and 20 years	66	31.5%
	Between 21 and 30 years	100	47.8%
	More than 31 years	23	11.2%
Socio-economic level of schools	Low-income schools	74	35.4%
	Middle-income schools	113	54.1%
	High-income schools	22	10.5%
Grade	1 st grade	49	23.4%
	2 nd grade	54	25.8%
	3 rd grade	54	25.8%
	4 th grade	52	24.9%
TOTAL		209	100%

According to Table 1, 117 (56%) participants were female, and 92 (44%) of them were male. Of all the participants, 20 (9.5%) of them had work experience ranging from 1 year to 10 years, while 66 (31.5%) of them had between 11 and 20 years of experience. Likewise, 100 (47.8%) participants had between 21 and 30 years of experience, and 23 (11.2%) had more than 31 years of experience. Among the teachers, 74 (35.4%) were working at low-income schools; 113 of them (54.1%) were teaching at middle-income schools; and 22 (10.5%) were teachers at schools with high-income schools. Of all the participants, 49 of them (23.4%) were teaching first-grade students; 54 (25.8%) were teaching second-grade students; 54 (25.8%) were teaching third-grade students; and 52 (24.9%) were teaching fourth-grade students. For the qualitative part of the research, 10 teachers were interviewed, six of whom were women and four of whom were men. Of these teachers, four of them were teaching at low socio-economic level schools; four at middle-income schools; and 2 at schools with high socio-economic level.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

In the study, the Life Studies Teaching Attitude Scale developed by Sarıkaya, Özgöl, and Yılar (2017) was used for the quantitative part of the study. The scale consists of 24 items and 3 subscales (loving, appreciation, caring). The validity and reliability studies of the scales were conducted to measure attitudes towards life studies teaching (Sarıkaya, Özgöl, & Yılar, 2017). Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated to determine whether the scale was reliable for this study. Cronbach's Alpha (α) values of the scale were .89 for the "loving" subscale, .88 for the "appreciation" subscale, .85 for the "caring" subscale and .93 for the whole scale. Examples of the scale items were as follows; *"I find life studies teaching very important"* (loving); *"I take great pleasure in reading the resources on life studies teaching"* (appreciation), and *"I regard the time spent on life studies teaching as waste of time"* (caring).

In the qualitative part of the study, a semi-structured interview form was used. The interview protocol included 10 questions, and the form was sent to two experts from the department of Primary School Teaching and to an expert from the department of Turkish Language Teaching. In addition, two primary school teachers were consulted. The form was finalized in line with the feedback received. A pilot study was conducted with a teacher to test the questions. The pilot study data were not included in the analysis. In order to determine the reliability of the interview form, the data were coded by the researcher and an expert together. For the purpose of calculating the consistency of the coding, the consensus formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) [$P = \text{consensus} / (\text{consensus} + \text{disagreement}) \times 100$] was used. Accordingly, the agreement ratio was .94.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The quantitative data in the study were collected using an online questionnaire (Google forms). Before starting the analysis, extreme and missing value analyses were conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Distribution graphs showed that the coefficients of kurtosis and skewness demonstrated normal distributions of the data. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and t-test were used to analyze the data. The qualitative data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Descriptive analysis was used for the analysis of the qualitative data. In this analysis, data are determined and interpreted according to predetermined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Themes and sub-themes were created based on the interview questions. The findings were supported and interpreted by providing direct quotations from the interviews. The interviews lasted approximately 20-25 minutes, and the ethics committee approval was taken for the study. The participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study. Oral consents of the participants were taken (and recorded), and the participants' identities were kept confidential. Ensuring the credibility of the qualitative data, the data were analyzed in depth, and expert opinions were used. In this process, interaction was established with the participants. The findings were supported with direct quotations from the participants. Based on these, it could be stated that credibility was achieved in the study.

FINDINGS

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LIFE STUDIES TEACHING

Table 2 presents the teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching. The table shows that the teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching ($\bar{x} = 4.01$) were high. The sub-scales demonstrated that caring had the highest mean ($\bar{x} = 4.21$), which was followed by loving ($\bar{x} = 4.20$) and appreciation ($\bar{x} = 3.61$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables

	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Life Studies Teaching	209	4.01	.509
Loving	209	4.20	.500
Appreciation	209	3.61	.651
Caring	209	4.21	.663

In order to determine whether the attitudes towards life studies teaching differed according to gender, t-test was used. Table 3 shows the t-test results of the teachers' attitude scores regarding life studies teaching with respect to gender.

Table 3. t-Test Results Regarding Attitudes Towards Life Studies Teaching in Terms of Gender

	Gender	N	\bar{x}	ss	t	df	p
Attitudes Towards Life Studies Teaching	Female	117	3.94	.488	-2.202	207	.029
	Male	92	4.09	.524			

According to Table 3, the teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching differed with respect to their gender ($t = -2.202, p < .05$). Accordingly, the male teachers had higher attitudes towards life studies teaching compared to the female teachers.

ANOVA was used to determine whether the teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching differed according to the socio-economic level of the region where the school was located. In order to determine which group or groups caused the difference, Scheffe test was conducted, and the results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of ANOVA Regarding the Attitudes Towards Life Studies Teaching with Respect to Socio-Economic Level of the School

	Socio-economic level of the School	N	\bar{x}	ss	Var.K.	KT	df	KO	F	p	Gap
Attitudes Towards Life Studies Teaching	Low	74	3,83	.581	Between G.	3.407	2	1.703	6.948	.001	1-2
	Middle	113	4,09	.417	Within G.	50.508	206	.245			1-3
	High	22	4.14	.547	Total	53.915	208				
	Total	209	4.01	.509							

Table 4 shows that the teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching differed according to the socio-economic level of the school ($[F(2-206) = 6.948; p < 0.01]$). The teachers who worked at low-income schools had lower attitudes towards life studies teaching than those working in schools with medium and high socio-economic levels.

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE TEACHING PROCESS OF THE LIFE STUDIES COURSE

The views of the primary school teachers about the teaching process of the life studies course are shown in Figure 1.

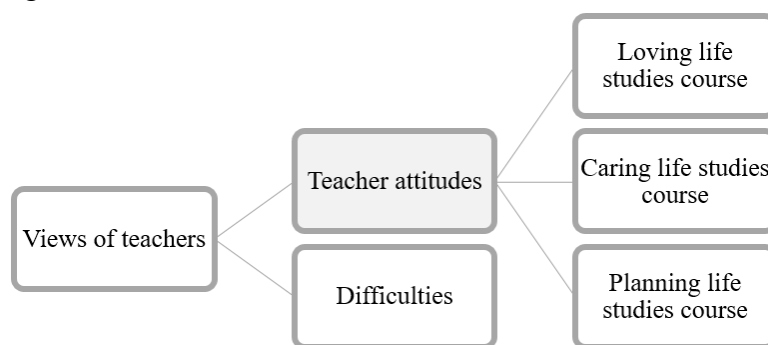


Figure 1. Primary school teachers' views about the teaching process of life studies course

As can be seen in Figure 1, the primary school teachers' views were examined under the categories of "teacher attitudes" and "difficulties". The teachers' attitudes were explained with the themes of loving life studies course, caring life studies course and planning life studies course. T4, who reported views about the theme of loving life studies course, said that *"the life studies course is very important, and it is very necessary for primary school students. I teach this lesson very enthusiastically. I like explaining the lesson topics and having the students talk about their own lives"*. T7 reported that *"I think this lesson is easy to teach, and I like teaching. As mentioned in the name of lesson 'life studies', it is about the life, and children can learn many of the topics we deal with. It is an important lesson"*. Another teacher (T9) added *"It's a lesson I like. I research the topics because they are interesting, and I learn together with the children. I'm improving myself"*. Lastly, T1 pointed out that *"I was showing videos. First, we were watching the subject on the video, then I was giving examples from their environment. The subjects were related to shopping, budget etc. We went to a grocery store and bazaar with the kids. I like this lesson, and I love trying doing different things"*.

In relation to the theme of caring life studies course, T7 said *"the subjects of the lesson are from real life; therefore, it shows the importance of the lesson. We are preparing children for life. We help them become decent citizens, so I attach great importance to this lesson"*. T11 stated that *"This lesson has never been ordinary for me. Only Mathematics and Turkish lessons can get ahead of this lesson not because life studies is unimportant, but because more time is*

allocated in the program for other courses”. T3 said “The time I devote to life studies is very important. Students need it. Therefore, all teachers including me also attach great importance to this lesson”. These responses show that the teachers cared about the life studies course, and they thought that the lesson was important for the development of children.

With reference to planning the life studies course theme, T2 said “Okay, it's a necessary lesson, but I do not spend hours to prepare for the course. I look at what I will teach before I enter the class. It is enough for me”. T6 said “I don't spend a lot of time for planning. It is easy for me to teach and to plan as well. Likewise, T7 noted “I plan the module. I think about what I will teach the next day. But I can assure that I study more for a math class. I think it is easy to plan the life studies course”. T5 said “Yes, it is an important course for me, but I don't want to teach life studies for hours”. These responses showed that the teachers appreciated life studies teaching yet did not spare much time for planning and preparing materials because they found it easy. The teachers' responses to the category of “difficulties” are shown in Figure 2.

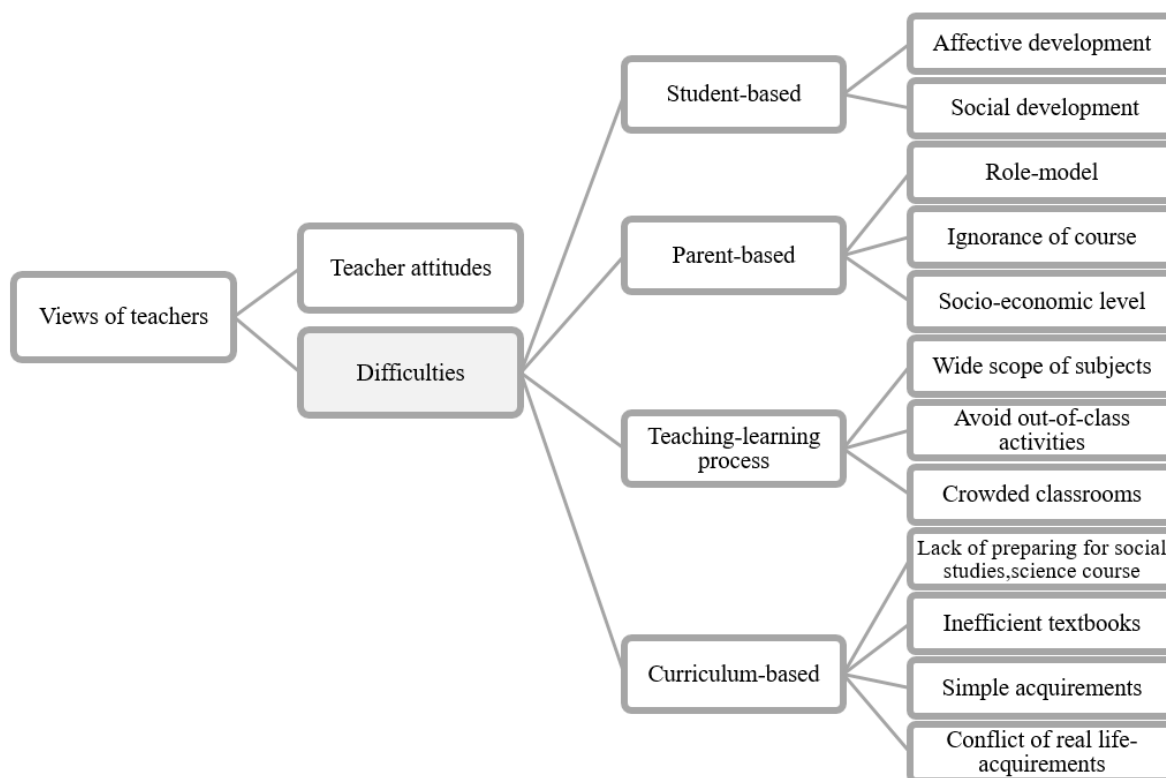


Figure 2. Teachers' responses to the category of difficulties

As can be seen in Figure 2, the teachers' responses to the category of “difficulties” were explained with the themes of student-based, parent-based, teaching-learning process and curriculum-based. There were two sub-themes in the student-based theme: *affective* and *social development*. In terms of the affective development sub-theme, T3 drew attention to the family topic: “There are students coming from orphanages or those whose parents are separate. I have hard time teaching the topic in the family. I do not go into much detail because I am afraid to upset them”. T5 expressed “I am cautious when explaining the physical characteristics. There are overweight and disabled students in my class. One of my students even cried and left the classroom while talking about physical differences, and she did not want to come to school that week”. In terms of social development, T10 said “They have difficulty in expressing themselves especially in the first grade. Life studies is a course that requires dialogue, so I find it difficult to communicate with the child and make them speak”. Similarly, T6 noted: “If the child is confident and can express himself/herself, it is okay but when communication turns into a monologue, it becomes a problem. I struggle with encouraging the students to speak”. This

indeed implies that the teachers faced problems with the students who had poor social and communication skills.

The parent-based theme included the sub-themes of *role-model*, *ignorance of the course* and *socio-economic level*. For role-model sub-theme, T1 said *“I try to teach third-grade children the habit of washing hands and face, but this should be the duty of their parents. The children did not learn it from their parents; therefore, they never had the habit of washing their hands and face. It is obvious that the child does not have a habit of washing his hands and face; however, his parents claim the otherwise”*. T6 said *“When I inform parents that their children do not have the habit of brushing their teeth, they do not care. If the habit of tooth-brushing does not have a place in the daily routines of parents, then the child does not give importance to brushing their teeth”*. T3 reported *“We have discussed the subjects of respecting the nature and protecting animals. We drew pictures; however; if a father kicks a dog at home or if parents have no interest in stray animals, then what I teach in the classroom is a waste of effort”*. T7 said *“At home, it requires a long time to consolidate and identify these values. Firstly, families should have these values and practice them. When this is not the case, we face some big problems”*. T8 said *“It does not make sense if I teach the values in theory because children imitate their parents. No matter how much I explain in the life studies course, I cannot achieve anything if value education is not given at home”*. T4, who shared his idea about the sub-theme of ignorance of the course stated that *“Life studies is considered as an easier subject than Math or Turkish, and no parent asks about life studies”*. According to T5, *“Parents do not ask whether their children have any problems with the life studies course because they do not consider it as part of the education: Does my child have a trouble with life studies? Are there any problems with the behaviors of my child? What values has my child acquired? Does my child have disrespectful behavior? Does my child have good relationships with others?”*. T3 added *“Expectation of the parent is not related to the life studies course itself. They give more importance to Math and Turkish in terms of academic success, not life studies. Turkish and Math are considered as academic skills. If the grades for these subjects are good, there is a perception among parents that life studies grades are high as well”*. Lastly, T2 said *“There are some parents who are not aware of the life studies course. Some of them want their children to study Turkish and Math rather than life studies. Also, one of the students’ parents asked me why I teach life studies instead of Math in the morning classes when the students have high levels of concentration”*.

Lastly, regarding the sub-theme of socio-economic level, T2 said *“Economic concerns are prevalent. I cannot ask parents who fail to afford to pay for the school trip. I cannot tell students to have a balanced diet during life studies classes if their parents cannot afford that food”*. T7 reported *“The economic situation of the family affects the content and progress of this course. As much as we talk about love and respect, the child is aware of the fact that he/she cannot show up with a Turkish lira or share his/her allowance. Because if the child shares it, s/he will starve and will not be able to buy lunch.”* The teachers’ views implied that parents should be role models and give much more importance to life studies course and that economic difficulties and lack of awareness about the value of schooling are among the most prevalent problems teachers face.

The theme of teaching-learning process is based on the sub-themes of *wide scope of subjects*, *avoiding out-of-class activities* and *crowded classrooms*. For the sub-theme of wide scope of subjects, T9 said *“Life studies course has a wide scope. You start with the toothbrush and end in a totally different subject. It is hard for me to follow the objectives and learning outcomes.”* T3 complained that sometimes she could not guess what the topic of the lesson would lead to. She said there were times when she was frustrated with the students’ answers. In terms of the sub-theme of avoiding out-of-class activities, T5 said *“I took the students out with their parents’ permission, but I always had the fear that something may happen to them. So, I do not prefer*

out-of-class activities". T2 explained "I cannot take them for a visit to Anitkabir or Ulubey. I cannot ask any money from their parents". Accordingly, the teachers had difficulties in relation to taking responsibility in out-of-class activities and having limited financial means, and they did not prefer such activities. For the sub-theme of crowded classrooms, T6 said "crowded classrooms cause problems, and students get bored. There is not enough time to talk to each student". T7 said "every student wants to talk, but the classroom is crowded. There is not enough time for each of them to talk. This leads to negative results. Students feel isolated when they cannot express their ideas". Another teacher, T10, said that she could not do different activities. She just gave the lecture and then delivered a test. She added that women had a heavy workload such as doing housework or caring children; therefore, she could not find many chances to prepare for the lessons. According to these explanations, crowded classrooms make it difficult for students to concentrate, and teachers cannot do effective activities.

The curriculum-based theme included the sub-themes of *lack of preparing for social studies and science course, inefficient textbooks, simple acquirements and conflict of real life-acquirements*. For the sub-theme of deficiency in preparing for social studies and science course, T1 said the social studies course started with wars and culture, which confused the students. She suggested, instead, that the wars could be taught lightly for third grade students. T7 said "life studies is separated from the social studies course. It continues with history, and it is not related to science anymore. Life studies course does not prepare students for the science course". T8 agreed that the life studies course did not prepare the student for social studies or science course. He argued that the subjects were different, so they had difficulty in the fourth grade. As a result, the teachers agreed that the life studies course lacked the necessary content to prepare the students for other courses in upper grades.

For the sub-theme of inefficient textbooks, T5 said "The acquirements are good, but the books are bad. Textbooks are not useful. Topics could be shorter. Books could include activities based on cutting and painting. That is why I cannot use the books efficiently". T10 said "The books are not up-to-date. It is the same as the book I used four years ago. They should be up to date as we provide students with dynamic everyday information. I think this is a big problem". Lastly, T1 said "The books are old, and we do not have the new versions. Who are the other staff at school? The kid has no idea. What parts are there in the school? But we could not do many of the activities due to the online and distance education". The problems such as out-of-date textbooks or inappropriate materials for the first-grade students affected the teaching of the course negatively. Regarding the sub-theme of simple acquirements, T6 said, "There are always such physical features, personality traits and environmental cleanliness issues. Every time the children see them, they say we learned them last year. It sounds simple. There are not many different things". T2 said "I think the acquirements are simple. For example, children know the school. The manager knows the class. I have a hard time in teaching these. Another teacher who gave an opinion about this sub-theme mentioned;

"Children know many things. We need to teach new things. I have to admit; this situation is rather difficult for me. For instance, five sense organs, if I show them the ears or eyes, it will not be meaningful. But when I say that our eyes are so powerful than a camera or our tongue is made up of pigments, I reach my goal"
(T1)

According to the teachers' views, life studies seemed simple to the children, and the teachers had difficulties in finding striking examples. Lastly, in the curriculum-based theme, there was a sub-theme of conflict of real life – acquirements. In this sub-theme, T9 said "this is a rural area. The programs are prepared in a way that they tell about a perfect life. For example, the division of labor at home is well described in the book, but students say, 'my father does not work at home'. What we tell is different from what they experience at home". T7 expressed "the examples given by the child from his/her own life do not match with the subjects of the life

studies course. It is a lesson of life, but that life is very different from these children's real lives. Therefore, the program is very unrealistic." Finally, T8 mentioned *"The situation of parents is bad. I am talking about healthy foods for a balanced diet. Some students say that they have never eaten cheese or butter. Therefore, the subject of the lesson and the real life of students do not match. I have a hard time on such issues"*. Accordingly, life studies acquirements seem unrealistic for children in schools located in a low socio-economic area. Teachers find it difficult to connect the subjects with the real lives of the students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the attitudes of the primary school teachers towards the life studies course were high. Similarly, the qualitative findings showed that the teachers expressed positive views about life studies teaching, and they found the course important, valuable and easy. They also enjoyed teaching the course, and the course helped self-improvement. In the literature, studies carried out with teachers (Yurtbakan & Altun, 2019; Çetin, 2020) and with preservice teachers (Çetin, 2018; Batmaz & Altun, 2019) showed that attitudes towards life studies teaching were at a high level. The quantitative results demonstrated that the subscale of caring had the highest mean, which was followed by loving and appreciation, and the qualitative data supported this finding. In relation to the sub-scale of appreciation, the teachers valued the course but did not spend much time for planning, and they thought that was not necessary. Parallel to this finding, studies (Çetin, 2018; Yurtbakan & Altun, 2019) using the scale developed by Sarıkaya, Özgöl, and Yılar (2017) found that teachers had the highest mean in the sub-scale of caring, which was followed by the sub-scales of loving and appreciation, respectively. Therefore, the themes of attitudes towards life studies teaching in this study were consistent with the aforementioned research findings. Education at Glance 2019 (OECD, 2019) reported that the majority of the time at primary school is allocated to courses related to reading-writing, mathematics and literature. Accordingly, the time allocated to the courses of Turkish and mathematics is more than to life studies. This was expressed by some of the teachers as well. For instance, one of the teachers mentioned that the life studies course was considered less important compared to Turkish and Mathematics and suggested that reducing the course hours of Turkish and Mathematics might allow the life studies course to become more important in the primary school curricula.

The gender perspective showed that the male teachers' attitudes towards life studies were higher than the female teachers'. For example, a teacher who expressed an opinion in the sub-theme of crowded class stated that women had a lot of work at home and could not spare time to prepare for lessons. However, inconsistent with this finding, a study by Çetin (2020) revealed that attitudes towards life studies teaching did not differ based on gender. Another study conducted by Gündüz (2000) found that female preservice teachers had higher attitudes towards life studies teaching compared to the male participants. The differentiation of the research results in the context of the gender variable might be due to the geographical location, economic factors and personal characteristics.

The study showed that the teachers working in schools with low socio-economic level had lower level of attitudes towards life studies teaching than the teachers working in schools with medium and high socio-economic levels. Some of the qualitative data obtained in the study supported this finding. In the sub-theme of socio-economic code of the parent-based theme formed based on the teachers' views and in the sub-theme of conflict of real life-acquirements of the curriculum-based theme, the teachers emphasized the problems arising from the socio-economic level. Accordingly, the teachers who worked at low-income schools had difficulties because some of the life studies issues were unrealistic for the students at economically disadvantaged schools. The most important variable determining student performance at

primary education level is socio-economic level (ERG, 2014). Academic development of children with low socio-economic level progress is slower than that of other children (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Difficulties experienced in the context of life studies course due to socio-economic reasons also affect teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of the lesson. The research findings showed that these difficulties negatively affected the teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching.

During the interviews, the teachers reported that the scope of the course was very wide and that they had difficulty in presenting the subject in a coherent way due its comprehensive scope. Life studies is a comprehensive course based on the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle (Brückl, 1932), and its scope consists of social sciences, natural sciences, art, thoughts and values (Sönmez, 2010). The subjects in the curriculum are presented in a simplified manner in accordance with the developmental characteristics of students. However, the lesson subjects within the scope of the course are related with life, and the willingness of each student to talk about their own life can sometimes distract students' attention. The teachers stated that they had difficulty in taking advantage of out-of-class activities within the scope of the life studies course. They attributed this difficulty to the socio-economic level of the family and unwillingness of parents to take responsibility. Contrary to this finding, a study by Armağan-Erbil & Doğan (2019) showed that it was important to benefit frequently from out-of-class activities. Another study by Gündoğan (2020) concluded that students were willing to benefit from out-of-class activities in life studies course. Based on this difference between the findings of the present study and other research findings in the literature, it could be stated that teachers consider out-of-class activities necessary in life studies course and that they yet have difficulty in performing them, which prevents the course from being taught effectively and achieving the learning outcomes.

Another important finding obtained in the study was related to the problems arising from parents such as being a wrong role-model, ignoring the course and not paying attention to values or education at home. This is related to the family's not being actively involved in the schooling process. Studies revealed that family support was important for teachers and students (Pena, 2000; Barge & Loges, 2003; Argon & Kıyıcı, 2012; Jafarov, 2015). Hatipoğlu & Kavas (2016) found in their study that positive parenting approaches had positive reflections on teachers' performances. Argon & Kıyıcı (2012) reported that the family's low level of intention to participate in the education of the child negatively affected the motivation and performance of the teacher. In this context, the reinforcement of the topics learned in the life studies course by the family at home is important in terms of both student motivation and the teacher's attitude towards the lesson.

The study indicated that the teachers had problems arising from the curriculum. Some of the acquirements differed from the real lives of the children; in other words, the acquirements emphasized the ideal life. This posed a problem especially for students living in disadvantaged areas. According to the teachers, these students had difficulty in internalizing the subject and adapting it to their own lives. Similarly, a study by Karaman (2019) showed that life studies subjects were prepared without taking into account the cultural values and regional differences of the country and that textbooks were not up-to-date. Hanbaba & Bektaş (2007) emphasized the necessity to include playing in life studies textbooks while teaching this course. Gündoğan and Kılıç (2020) stated that the nature and content of the course were quite suitable for learning via playing. Therefore, enriching and updating the textbooks with methods such as educational games will make students more active. Also, it may allow teachers to benefit more from the textbooks.

Teacher attitude affects the teaching of a course directly or indirectly (Wilkins, 2009). Teachers' attitudes towards the subject are important in creating a learning desire in students (Bhargava & Pathy, 2014). Primary school teachers' care and love for the lesson are effective on students'

participation. Teachers' high attitudes towards life studies teaching are important to achieve the goals of the course, to teach the lessons effectively and to enjoy the lessons. Although teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching are at a high level, they have some difficulties in teaching. These difficulties arise from students, parents, teaching-learning process and curriculum. The main difficulties expressed by the teachers could be listed as parents' devaluation of the course, not being an effective role-model, low socio-economic level, wide subject content, crowded classes, inadequacy of textbooks and differences between real life and acquirements. These difficulties may negatively affect their attitudes towards the course. This situation may prevent students from getting the maximum benefit from life studies course. Therefore, it is obvious that teachers, parents and curriculum development experts have a great responsibility in achieving the goals of the life studies course, which is one of the important courses at primary school. At this point, the following suggestions could be offered to practitioners and researchers:

- Teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching and students' attitudes towards this course can be analyzed comparatively.
- Participant observation can be used to analyze teachers' attitudes towards life studies teaching. Thus, other factors that affect attitude can be studied.
- More research can be conducted on the relationship between the attitude towards life studies teaching and the socio-economic level. The data can be collected from students and parents. Diversity can be made in the data collection process.
- Based on the problems that teachers experience in life studies teaching, needs analysis studies could be conducted. These studies can be used in the curriculum development process.
- The factors underlying negative thoughts of parents about the life studies course can be examined.
- The necessary planning could be done to encourage parents' participation in the life studies course. Parents can be encouraged to take responsibility for in-class activities. Parents can provide support for social responsibility projects.

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