The Mediation Role of Responsibility and Benevolence between Eighth Grade Secondary School Students' Empathy Skills and the Value of Justice*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to test the mediating role of responsibility and benevolence between empathy skills and the justice value of eighth-grade secondary school students. The study group, which was designed in the type of a multifactorial predictive correlation, consisted of 646 eighth-grade secondary school students attending 20 different secondary schools that were randomly selected. The research data were collected with 4 different scales "Empathy Scale, Responsibility Scale, Benevolence Scale, and Justice Scale" developed by the authors. SPSS vol. 22 and AMOS vol.24 package programs were used to analyze the data, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, linear correlation, and mediation analysis techniques. In line with the analyzes, it was seen that there was a moderately significant positive relationship between the empathy skill and the mentioned values. That empathy predicted the values mentioned above in a positive way. In addition, it has been determined that responsibility and benevolence have a significant partial mediation role between empathy skill and justice value. It has been concluded that empathy and responsibility, and benevolence have an important role in teaching the value of justice in social studies courses.

1. Introduction

Values, the principles and basic beliefs that guide behaviors, and the by which actions are judged good or desirable (Halstead & Taylor, 2000, p. 169), affect behavior (Rokeach, 1973).It is claimed that there is no single type of value behind the behaviors, that values are the basis of the behaviors, and that the behaviors are directly or indirectly guided by values (Demircioğlu & Tokdemir, 2008; Dilmaç, 2002; Güngör, 1998). It is claimed that empathy, which is defined as the process of looking at events from the perspective of the other person, perceiving the feelings and thoughts of that person correctly, and communicating this situation to them (Rogers, 1975), also plays a central role in human behavior (Hogan, 1969; Smith, 2006). It is mentioned that there is a strong link between empathy and prosocial behaviors known as voluntary behaviors aimed at helping others (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Hoffman, 1987). It is also seen that empathy is a skill that positively affects prosocial behaviors (Batson et al., 1981; Jollife & Farrington, 2004). However, studies show that the person who empathizes with the individual in need of help feels completely responsible and helps with an altruistic motive, regardless of their interests (Batson, 2011; Oswald, 1996; Thakkar & Kanekar, 1989). Therefore, a relationship was established between empathy skills and values. It aimed to test the mediating

role of responsibility and benevolence between the empathy skills of secondary school eighth-grade students and the value of justice in the context of social studies. There are two reasons why these variables are considered in the context of social studies. First, empathy has been included as a skill that needs to be developed in the social studies curriculum for the first time in Turkey (Kabapınar, 2007, p. 103). It has still remained one of the 27 skills that should be gained in the social studies curriculum (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). The other is that social studies are an important lesson in values education and a more important position compared to other lessons (Keskin & Keskin, 2019; Nesbitt & Henderson, 2003). In addition, among the objectives of the social studies curriculum in Turkey, The importance and ways of being a virtuous person are aimed at adopting national, spiritual values and universal values (MoNE, 2018, p. 8). This statement shows how important social studies is in terms of values education and is a lesson related to values. It would be appropriate to state that the values of responsibility, justice, and benevolence discussed in the study are among the 18 values that are aimed to be developed in the social studies curriculum and constitute three of the ten core values that should be given in all curriculums in Turkey (MoNE, 2017; 2018).

1.1. Relationships between Empathy Skills and Value of Justice, Responsibility and Benevolence

Justice, the dependent variable of the research, is a democratic value that effectively regulates human relations and ensures social order (Duran & Bitir, 2021). Solomon (2004), who argues that the sense of justice develops due to the individual's reactions to injustices, argues that the sense of compassion is the source of justice. Hökelekli (2011) defines compassion as the feeling of pity that a person feels when he sees positive things in himself but not in the other person, and stated that compassion helps people oppose and resist the injustice done others. The relationship between justice and mercy is also explained by Solomon (2004) as follows: A person thinks about what he has and compares it with what the other party does not have.He wants others to have what he has. Then, helping behavior occurs in the person who feels pity. As a result of helping behavior, justice emerges. As can be understood from the explanation, it can be said that the person makes a cognitive evaluation by empathizing during the emergence of the sense of justice. At this point, it can be mentioned that there is a relationship between empathy and justice. Studies show that it is related (Büyükbodur & Kayma, 2020; Erken, 2009; Sarmusak, 2011; Segal & Wagaman, 2017). However, their relations have a complicated structure (Decety & Cowell, 2015). In other words, it is seen that there is no direct relationship between empathy and justice, and the behavior of helping together with the feeling of compassion is effective in the relationship between the two. Baron & Kenny (1986) stated that the relationships between the dependent and independent variables may not always be linear. Mediator variable(s) may also occur between the two variables.

From this point of view, benevolence was determined as one of the mediating variables of the research. Benevolence, which is a social value that unites society and strengthens unity and solidarity (Sönmez & Akıncan, 2013, p. 106), is the attitude and behavior of virtuous people who believe that some values will increase in life if shared, and the use of the opportunities one has for the benefit of others (Aktepe, 2010, p. 45).Concurrently, it is known that benevolence, which is a prosocial behavior, is associated with empathy, and sincere and selfless altruistic motives are effective in the helping behavior of an individual who empathizes with the person in need of help (Batson, 2011). It is argued that acting justly requires the values of respect, honesty, and responsibility, as well as the capacity for empathy (Katım, 2010), and that justice can be achieved by realizing the individual's sense of responsibility (Topçu, 2015).

On the other hand, it is said that certain values are imposed on the individual from the culture to which they are attached and that justice and responsibility from these values will increase the capacity to empathize (Hoffman, 2000). In this case, it can be mentioned that the responsible behavior that the individual shows completely sincerely and without any external reward expectation (Öner, 1987) is related to both empathy and justice. Studies show that empathy is associated with responsibility and that empathy predicts responsibility positively (Sanmartín et al., 2011; Yontar & Yel, 2018).

Along with the support of the explanations and related studies, a theoretical model presented in Figure 1 was constructed. The value of responsibility and benevolence plays a mediating role between the empathy skill and the justice value. In the relevant literature, there are studies consctructing structural models in which empathy and social responsibility are the mediating variables, interpersonal helping behavior is the dependent variable (González & Lay, 2017), empathy is both the mediator and the independent variable, and helping

behavior is the dependent variable (Carlo et al., 2011; Guevara et al., 2015; Schoeps et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). In the context of social studies in Turkey, two studies tested the mediating role of benevolence and respect (Sever & Bayır, 2020) between empathy skills and fairness and the value of friendship and responsibility (Gokalp & Inel, 2021) between empathy and helpfulness. However, a hypothetical model in which the variables in the study were tested together was not encountered.
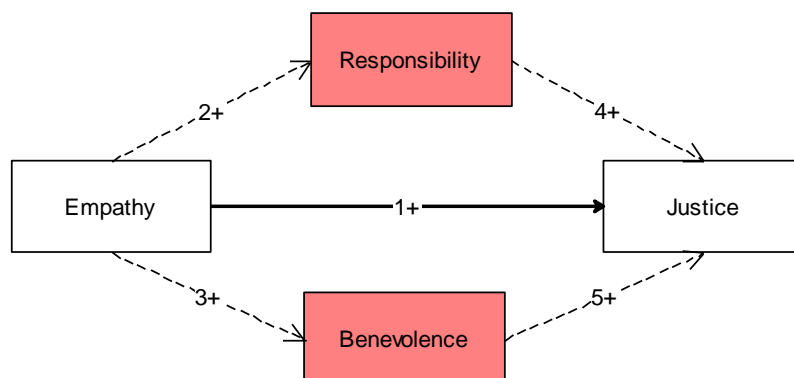

Figure 1. *The Hypothetical Model of the Effects of Empahty on Justice Mediating Responsibility and Benevolence*

As seen in Figure 1, five (5) paths, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, were created in the model. These paths represent the conditions put forward by Baron and Kenny (1986) in their mediation analysis and show the hypotheses to be tested in the research. The hypotheses of the research are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Empathy predicts justice positively.

H_2: Empathy predicts responsibility positively.

H_3: Empathy predicts helpfulness positively.

H_4: Responsibility predicts justice positively.

H_5: Benevolence predicts justice positively.

If the above hypotheses are confirmed, research hypothesis H6 "There is a mediating role between empathy and justice, along with the value of responsibility and benevolence" will be tested. Thus, it is expected that the findings obtained in the study will help to teach students the value of justice.

2. Method

2.1. The Research Model

The research was designed in the multi-factor predictive correlation type, which is one of the correlational methods. In predictive correlation studies, the relationships between variables are examined. One of the variables is tried to predict the other. Thus, the unknown values of the variable are tried to be determined (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In addition, while direct relationships are tested in multi-factor predictive correlation designs, it aims to reveal indirect (mediation) relationships. In this way, the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable is determined, and the changes in the dependent variable are tried to be explained (Büyüköztürk et al., 2017; Punch, 2016). It has shown a relationship between empathy, justice, responsibility and benevolence supported by the relevant literature. It was tested whether there is an indirect effect of the value of responsibility and benevolence between the value of empathy and justice.

2.2. Participants and Procedure

The research was carried out with 646 volunteer 8th-grade students (female = 435, male = 281) selected by random sampling method, who continue their education in 20 different secondary schools in the city of Uşak, located in the inner west of Turkey, in the 2020-2021 academic year. Research data were collected in two stages. 105 Data from the study were collected in person from students, and 541 of them were collected via "Google Forms" due to the suspension of schools because of the pandemic. While collecting face-to-face data, necessary reminders are made for filling in each question, and the "required to be filled" option is activated for each question so that the questions transferred to Google Form are not left blank. Thus, loss of data is prevented.

2.3. Scales

The research data were collected through scales named "Empathy Scale, Benevolence Scale, Responsibility Scale, and Justice Scale," developed by the authors. All the items in the scale were scored as "Not suitable to me=1, Somewhat suitable to me=2, Quite suitable to me=3, Completely suitable to me=4" Getting 1 point from any item on the scale means that the relevant value is low, and getting 4 points means that it is high. In addition, no reverse items were used in any of the scales. Data regarding the scales' reliability, validity, and structure are given below.

Empathy Scale: It consists of seven items with a single factor structure. (Sample item: When I see a child who has no friends, I can put myself in their shoes and understand how they feel). It was found that it explained 44.085% of the total variance. Its Cronbach's alpha value was calculated to be .79. Model fit indices of the scale are as follows: $\chi 2$ = 24.456, df = 14, p <.05, $\chi 2$/df = 1.75, RMSEA = .04, IFI = .98, AGFI=.96, GFI = .98, TLI= .97, CFI=.98, SRMR=.033.

Justice Scale: It has a single factor structure and consists of five items. (Sample item: Even if the right person is someone I do not like, I will be there for them). It was found that it explained 47.560% of the total variance. Its Cronbach's alpha value was calculated to be .72. Model fit indices of the scale are as follows: $\chi 2$ = 8.337, df = 5, p >.05, $\chi 2$/df = 1.670, RMSEA = .04, IFI = .99, AGFI=.97, GFI = .99, TLI= .98, CFI=.99, SRMR=.025.

Benevolence Scale: It consists of seven items with a single factor structure. (Sample item: I help out when I see an old person wanting to cross the road). It was found that it explained 49.853% of the total variance. Its Cronbach's alpha value was calculated to be .83. Model fit indices of the scale are as follows: $\chi 2$ = 19.692, df =14, p <.05, $\chi 2$/df = 1.40, RMSEA = .03, IFI = .99, AGFI=.97, GFI = .98, TLI= .97, CFI=.99, SRMR=.026.

Responsibility Scale: It consists of seven items, and has a single factor structure. (Sample item: I do the tasks that I think I am obliged to do without needing to be reminded by anyone). It was found that it explained 48.035% of the total variance. Its Cronbach's alpha value was calculated to be .82. Model fit indices of the scale are as follows: $\chi 2$ = 18.149, df =14, p <.05, $\chi 2$/df = 1.29, RMSEA = .03, IFI = .99, AGFI=.97, GFI = .99, TLI= .99, CFI=.99, SRMR=.026.

As can be seen, all of the scales are in a single factor structure, and the total variances explained in each scale are over 30%. According to Büyüköztürk (2005), it is sufficient to explain the total variance of 30% or more in scales consisting of a single factor. In addition, Cronbach's alpha values of the scales are in the range of $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$, indicating good internal consistency coefficients (George & Mallery, 2010).

Finally, for the general fit of the models, the $\chi 2$/sd parameter being below 2, the RMSEA and SRMR values below .05, and the others above IFI, AGFI, GFI, TLI, and CFI >.90 indicate that the models are well-fitted (Kline, 2011; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). It is seen that the fit values of the scales are also included in the criteria values given.

2.4. Data Analysis

Path analyzes were used in this study. The mediating role of responsibility and justice values together between the empathy skills of secondary school eighth-grade students and the value of justice were tested. The study's data analysis was carried out in two (2) stages as "preparatory phase and mediation analysis."

Preparatory phase: First of all, the correlation values between the research variables were examined. To explain the existence of an effect, the correlations between the variables are examined to know whether there is a relationship between the assumed structures and whether the relationship is worth examining (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Neuman, 2009). The "Pearson Product Moments" correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the related variables. If the correlation coefficient is less than .30, it indicates that the relationship is weak, between .30 and .70 it is medium, and if it is greater than .70, it indicates a high level (Köklü et al., 2007).

Then, skewness and kurtosis values were checked to know whether the data showed a normal distribution. There are different opinions about the ranges of skewness and kurtosis values. Tabachnick & Fidell (2012) recommend that the skewness and kurtosis values should be in the range of +1.5, -1.5; on the other hand, George & Mallery (2010) suggest that it should be in the range of +2, -2. The skewness and kurtosis values preferred in the study are +1.5, - 1.5.

Finally, we reviewed the variance inflation factor (VIF) values of the models used to determine multicollinearity among the independent variables that Licht (1995) recommended investigating between empathy, responsibility, and benevolence.There are different opinions as to whether the VIF value should not be 4 and above (Hair et al., 2010) or 2.5 and below (Allison, 1999). The VIF value was taken according to the 2.5 and below criteria in the study. Thus, with all these analyzes carried out using the SPSS vol. 22 package program, the research model was made ready for mediation analysis.

Mediation analysis: The mediation effect of responsibility and benevolence between the empathy skills of eighth-grade middle school students and the value of justice was tested with path analyses. The significance of the determined indirect effect coefficient was tested with the bias-corrected percentile method. The bias-corrected bootstrap method provides strong evidence for the effect of the mediating variable with bias-corrected confidence intervals (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). In the bias-corrected bootstrap method, it is suggested that the 95% confidence interval and the sample be increased to 2000 or 5000, or the bootstrap number should be greater than the valid number of observations in the data set. The indirect effect should not be zero in the confidence intervals, that is, none of the lower and upper values should have a negative value (Davidson & MacKinnon, 2000; Efron & Tibshirani, 1986; Hair et al., 2014). In the study, the significance of the indirect effect was tested with 5000 samples at a 95% confidence interval, and then the fit indices of the final model were given. The AMOS vol.24 package program was also used for mediation analysis.

2.5. Ethical

In this study, all rules that must be followed under the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive were followed. Name of the ethical review committee: Uşak University Ethics Committee Date of ethical evaluation decision: 29.09.2020 number of the ethical evaluation document: E.28914

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Descriptive statistics and correlation values related to VIF values of variables (empathy, responsibility, and benevolence) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	VIF	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1 Empathy	2.91	.66	-.32	-.42	1.61	-			
2 Responsibility	3.28	.60	-.76	.25	1.90	.57**	-		
3 Benevolence	3.35	.60	-1.0	.73	1.80	.54**	63**	-	
4 Justice	3.19	.65	-.82	.41	-	.59**	.61**	.53**	-

Note: **p < .01, *N = 646*

Examining Table 1, the fact that the skewness and kurtosis values range from -1.5 to +1.5 indicates that the variables have a normal distribution.A VIF value of <2.5 indicates that there is no multicollinearity problem between empathy, responsibility, and benevolence. Moreover, it is seen that there are moderately significant positive correlations between the variables.

3.2. Mediation Analyses

To test whether responsibility and benevolence have a mediating role in the relationship between empathy and justice, a direct path between empathy and justice was first established in line with the conditions of Baron & Kenny (1986) (path 1), the independent variable (empathy) predicted the dependent variable (justice) in a significant positive direction and the H1 hypothesis was confirmed (β= .731, SE = .069, t = 10.343, p < .001). Empathy explained 53% of the total changes in justice (R^2=.534).

Then, H2, H3, H4 ve H5 hypotheses were tested by including responsibility and benevolence as mediator variables in the model. Empathy predicted responsibility significantly positively and H2 was confirmed (β= .712, SE = .055, t = 10.331, p < .001). Empathy significantly positively predicted helpfulness and H3 was confirmed (β= .688, SE = .059, t = 11.575, p <.001). Moreover, empathy accounted for 51% of responsibility ($R2$=.506) of responsibility and 47% (R^2=. 473) of benevolence.

Responsibility and benevolence, on the other hand, predicted justice significantly and positively, respectively, and H4 and H5 were confirmed (β= .410, SE = .079, t = 6.144, p < .001; β= .166, SE = .053, t = 2.937, p <.01). Finally, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were confirmed, research hypothesis H6, testing the mediating role of responsibility and benevolence between empathy and justice, was tested, and the final model shown in Figure 2 was obtained.
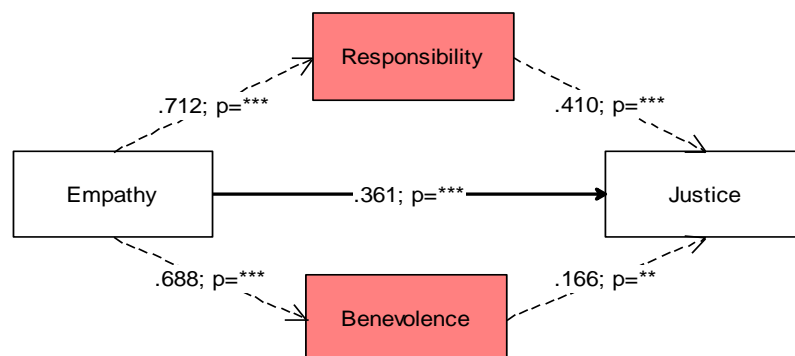

Figure 2. *Path analysis results of the effects of empahty on justice mediating responsibility and benevolence, N = 646. ***p < .001; **p < .01*

When Figure 2 is examined, as a result of adding mediator variables (responsibility and helpfulness) to the model, the effect of empathy on justice has decreased, but it has remained significant (β=.361 < β= .731; p<.01). This finding shows that responsibility and benevolence play a "partial mediator" role together (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Şimşek, 2007). The findings regarding the significance of the detected partial indirect effect are given in Table 2.

Table 2. *The Bootstrapping for the Partial Mediation Model (N = 646)*

		β	SE	R^2	%95 CI	
Model Path					Lower	Upper
Standardized Indirect Effect	2→4+ 3→5	.406**	.066	.686	.282	.538

Note: **p<.01

Findings show that hypothesis H6 "There is a mediating role between empathy and justice, together with the value of responsibility and benevolence" is accepted. According to Table 2, the indirect effect coefficient of the indicated road is significant (β= .406, p < .01) and there is no zero between the lower and upper values of the 95% confidence interval (95% CI= .282, .538). In addition, while empathy directly explains 53% of justice (R^2=.534), it is seen that the total variance explained increased to 69% with the introduction of mediating variables (responsibility and benevolence) (R^2=.686).

Finally, it was determined that the fit indices of the final model were also within acceptable criterion value ranges χ2 = 773.920, df= 294, p<.01, χ2/df= 2.632, RMSEA=.050, SRMR=.047, CFI=.92, IFI=.92, TLI=.92, GFI=.91 (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2011).

4. Discussion

In the study, the mediating role of responsibility and benevolence between the empathy skills of middle school eighth-grade students and the value of justice was tested. First of all, it was found that students' average scores on the scales were close to 3 (empathy = 2.91) and above 3 (responsibility = 3.28, benevolence = 3.35, justice = 3.19). Considering that the highest average score that can be obtained on each scale is 4, it can be said that students' empathy, responsibility, benevolence, and justice scores are relatively high. However, the empathy score of the students is relatively low compared to the others. The age of the students in the study group (13 to 14 years old) coincides with the adolescence period. In this period, students are more engaged with themselves since they have an adolescent egocentric thinking structure. In addition, it may also be difficult to distinguish one's thoughts from the thoughts of others and get perspective (Berk, 2012). Students' empathy scores are lower than the scores on other scales can be explained by the situation mentioned above. In addition, it has been determined that empathy is a skill that is related to the values of justice, responsibility, and benevolence and predicts these values positively. Studies with similar findings were found in the literature

(Büyükbodur & Kayma, 2020; Erken, 2009; Sanmartín et al., 2011; Sarmusak, 2011; Segal & Wagaman, 2017; Yontar & Yel, 2018). In addition to the studies, Elbir & Bağçı (2013), who examined the studies based on values education in Turkey based on document analysis, reported that empathy is a skill that should be emphasized in values education in the studies they examined. Baş & Beyhan (2012), who also conducted a similar study, concluded that attitudes and opinions are generally taken in studies on values and suggested that empathy be included in studies to understand values better. In fact, it is seen that empathy is also included in the values education program applied in Viadero's (2003) study. Bailey (2000), on the other hand, states that empathetic thinking must be included in the value education process of democratic societies; that empathy will help to think reflectively and be tolerant before reaching a decision, and thus the reasoning process will be supported. When the findings obtained so far are evaluated together with the relevant literature, it can be said that empathy is an effective skill in understanding the values of justice, responsibility, and benevolence among students. As students' empathy skills increase, their values will increase positively.

A striking finding of the study is also the significant partial mediating role of responsibility and benevolence between empathy ability and justice value. In other words, eighth graders' empathy ability affects justice scores both directly and indirectly through responsibility and benevolence. While empathy skill directly explained 53% of the total changes in the value of justice, the rate increased to 69% due to adding responsibility and benevolence to the model. Findings show that empathy is a prerequisite skill in seeking justice on behalf of others (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). However, responsibility and benevolence have a significant effect in explaining the complex relationships between empathy and justice. In the related literature, in the study in which the students of a fourth grade of an elementary primary school constituted the study group and in which, in contrast to the study, the behavior of respect instead of the value of responsibility was determined as the mediating variable (Sever & Bayır, 2020), it was found that the variables of benevolence and respect had a significant mediating role between the empathy ability and the behavior of being fair. From this point of view, it can be said that the findings of the studies overlap with each other and that the values of respect, responsibility, and benevolence are effective variables together with the empathy skill in explaining the justice value of the students.

5. Implications, Limitations, and Future Direction

Justice, which is among the basic building blocks of democracy (Cılga, 2001), is one of the democratic values such as respect, responsibility, equality, freedom, etc. (Kıncal & Işık, 2003; Tanilli, 1995). Dinç & Üztemur (2016), pointing out that the quality of values education provided in schools serves as a mortar for shaping the future of society, adding that democratic values occupy an important place among the values that should be taught in schools. In addition, it is aimed to raise citizens who can think critically, freely, and empathize in democratic societies (Büyükkaragöz & Üre, 1994). Democratic education aims to raise individuals who use these thinking skills, stand up against injustice, defend equality and justice, and serve society's welfare by using their social participation skills (Moller, 2006). In studies (Dinç & Üztemur, 2016; Üztemur et al., 2018), it is seen that justice is perceived by most the students as an important value that prevents conflicts between individuals by providing welfare and peace in society.

The variables (empathy, justice, responsibility) of this study, which is handled in the context of social studies, are some of the basic skills and values that democratic individuals should have. It is seen that the justice value of the eighth-grade students in the study can be explained both directly through empathy skills and indirectly through the value of responsibility and benevolence. Nevertheless, it is possible to mention that social studies are a discipline that serves the purpose of democratic education beyond being a subject closely related to values. Social study is a course that aims to develop working, thinking, and interpersonal group skills necessary for effective democratic citizenship (Öztürk, 2007, p. 29). On the other hand, the national standards developed by the National Council of Social Studies for social studies teachers state that social studies teaching and learning is strong when it is based on values (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2002, p. 13). In that case, it is recommended that social studies teachers consider the value of responsibility and benevolence along with empathy skills while teaching students justice, which is a democratic value. However, it was mentioned that the relations between empathy skills and justice are complex, and a partial indirect effect was determined in the study. In cases of partial mediation, it is suggested that there may be different variables between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Considering these,

social studies researchers can determine other mediator variables and test the indirect effects of the variables between empathy and justice.

6. Conclusion

In the study, a structural model has been proposed regarding the mediating role of responsibility and benevolence between the empathy skills of secondary school eighth-grade students and the value of justice. The model is supported by theoretical knowledge and related research. Empathy positively predicted justice, responsibility, and benevolence. Similarly, a positive effect of responsibility and benevolence on justice was observed, and a significant indirect effect of responsibility and benevolence was found in the relationship between empathy and justice scores.It has been concluded that empathy and responsibility and benevolence have an important role in teaching the value of justice in social studies courses.

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