




An Analysis of the Texts in the Life Studies Textbooks in the Context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹


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Abstract

In this research, we analyzed the life studies lesson textbooks taught in Turkey as of 2019–2020 within the scope of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Considering this purpose, we conducted content analysis using the document analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods. As a result, two themes emerged from life studies textbooks (LSTs), namely “the formation of the perception of children’s rights” and “the basic rights of immigrants and children with special needs,” and we developed a total of 17 codes belonging to these themes. We found that the texts in the LSTs do not contain enough information and findings within the scope of the articles of the UNCRC. In some themes, children’s rights are expressed intensely, while in other themes they are not included at all. Our findings suggest that children’s rights are expressed in the books but do not sufficiently address children’s rights as stated in the 54 articles of the UNCRC. In addition, the themes around children’s rights included in the textbooks are very scattered; we determined that there is no balanced distribution.

Keywords: *rights of the child, life studies textbooks (LSTs), document analysis*

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Introduction

Children have the rights that all other people have. But unlike adults, children have some special rights and responsibilities under the name of *children’s rights*, arising from their unique needs (Uğurlu & Gülsen, 2014).

¹ The initial findings of the study were presented at the 8th International Congress on Curriculum and Instruction Curriculum Studies in Lifelong Learning held in Burdur, Turkey on October 16–20, 2019.

According to UNICEF (2019a), these rights have been comprehensively expressed in 54 articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child UNCRC, and various definitions have been made for the rights in this convention. In this context, children's rights are the rights that (a) envisage protecting children from various negative effects and all kinds of abuse and neglect; (b) provide them with opportunities to grow up in emotionally appropriate conditions; and (c) provide their basic needs, such as health, education, and shelter (Nelken, 1998). The UNCRC is the most widely ratified core United Nations human rights treaty (Vandenhoe, 2022; Winter, 2022). Since children have equal rights worldwide, it is of great importance to support them in learning—and using—these rights in the most effective manner, which will become possible by raising their awareness of these rights from a young age. According to Sever (2006), children should be exposed to appropriate stimuli and educational stakeholders in the learning process so they can acquire the desired effective and cognitive characteristics from infancy to age 18. These stimuli and educational stakeholders within the learning environment can include teachers, school staff, peer groups, as well as textbooks. Textbooks are one of the most effective materials in the teaching process, as they can be used to obtain the necessary acquisitions regarding the rights of children (Candan & Ergen, 2014).

Textbooks are educational materials that contain all of the information society wants to convey—either explicitly or implicitly—in order to prepare children to become useful individuals in the future. In this context, there are references to a large number of norms and behavioral patterns that adults accept as true and want to instill in younger generations. Textbooks not only convey new information but also enable the political and social norms of a society to be remembered (Aslan, 2010; Akcan, 2022a). Most lessons that primary school students encounter are Turkish, mathematics, and life studies. The textbooks for these lessons—especially the life studies textbooks—are thought to contain more information and findings on children's rights when compared to other lessons.

According to Bektaş (2012), the first stage of primary education includes general life-related acquisitions, such as social communication, interaction, and phenomena, which are considered life studies. Therefore it can be said life studies lessons provide students with the “meaning of life” in its purest form. Türer (1992) also emphasized that the general purpose of life studies lessons taught at the primary school level is to ensure that students get to know their immediate surroundings regularly. And it is also important to teach life studies as a way to encourage the social, mental, and emotional development of children who are interested and curious about their environment and who want to know their rights and responsibilities. Türer (1992) felt he had an important tool in his hands when referring to life studies, as its format enables children to interact in harmony with the society they live in, it offers a combination of disciplines related to social and positive sciences, and it equips children with beneficial information within the framework of an active learning approach (Tay & Yıldırım, 2013; Ocak & Beydoğan, 2005; Akcan, 2022b).

In life studies lessons, the concept of children's rights stands out, as particular attention is paid to each of the following (Türer, 1992):

Students participate in learning classroom rules, which are included in the life studies curriculum at different grade levels.

- Students participate, on certain days and weeks, in club activities, school council work, etc., where issues are emphasized.
- Life studies help students have fun through games, adapt to the rules of games, behave appropriately during games, make friends, to know themselves and others, among other lessons.
- Care is taken to make decisions with the participation of students.

Life studies is a lesson that is considered important for children in order to make sense of life and to gain life experience. At the same time, life studies help children grasp the values related to the whole process of life. Referencing their life experiences—as well as their thoughts about the meaning of life—helps children see their environment in a multidimensional way (Kabapinar, 2007). Accomplishments, such as those listed above, exemplify the situations in which children should be able to acquire their rights through the aforementioned achievements.

Since the subject of life studies was transformed into social studies, human rights, citizenship, and democracy lessons—especially in the 4th grade—the thought that the subject contained basic information for increasing the perspectives on children’s rights was influential (Kuzucu, 2018). Based on these statements, we believed that it was especially important in this study to examine life studies textbooks in the context of children’s rights.

When we examined the relevant literature, we observed that various studies have been carried out by the UNCRC. Among them, Karakaş and Çelik (2016) evaluated child welfare in the context of children’s rights. Öztürk (2017) compared the life studies teaching programs from 1964 to the present in terms of the children’s right to participate. Özdemir-Uluç (2008), on the other hand, examined the status of including children’s rights in all primary education programs in 2005. Covell et al. (2010) and Özdemir-Doğan (2017) worked on the evaluation of children’s rights in education in schools. Lansdown et al. (2014) in their research theoretically explained the right to participate. Dirican (2018) worked on children and children’s rights in the historical process, and Kaya (2011) examined the views of education faculty students on children’s rights and revealed their perceptions and attitudes. There is no research on the analysis of life studies textbooks that are in line with the UNCRC (limited to the researched literature). Due to this situation, we believe that examining life studies textbooks, within the scope of UNCRC, will fill the gap in relevant literature—and contribute to the literature.

Methods

Research Pattern

In line with the purpose of the research, we evaluated life studies textbooks using document analysis, which is one of the qualitative research designs. Document review, a technique in itself, is a systematic method used to examine printed materials (Bowen, 2009; Akcan & Doğan, 2020). At the same time, document review includes the analysis of documents that have the potential to provide information and findings for the cases intended to be investigated, as well as direct observation, interviews, and other methods in research. In cases where data collection methods were ineffective, it was possible to use various materials related to the research problem as data sources in the research (Yildirim & Şimşek, 2016, p. 191).

We then analyzed the data collected by the document analysis technique through content analysis. Content analysis, which is often used in qualitative research, is a systematic technique that is summarized with coding, categories, and themes, and it adheres to certain rules (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013). The basic process in content analysis is to collect data that are close or similar in terms of meaning (in the context of certain codes and themes), and then present them in a way that the reader can make sense of the expressions more easily (Yildirim & Şimşek, 2011, p. 227). In addition, content analysis is used to obtain results, systematically and objectively, from the words and sentences in a text (Stone et al., 1966, p. 213) to obtain valid results regarding the content of the data (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 25). In line with these definitions, content analysis was preferred because it is the type of analysis that enables detailed examination of the life studies textbooks—which are also used as data sources and examined as documents in the related research—and can provide the clearest answer to the questions that form the basis of the research.

Study Materials

The research study materials consist of 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-grade life studies textbooks, beginning in the 2019–2020 academic year. These are the documents we analyzed:

- *1st Grade Life Studies Textbook*, Ardıç Publications
- *2nd Grade Life Studies Textbook*, Beşgen Publishing
- *3rd Grade Life Studies Textbook*, Evren Publishing

We chose to examine textbooks because of the effect of textbooks on students, which includes the realization of learning (one of the basic elements of teaching). Textbooks are worth examining. Primary school students, encountering an environment other than their family, are familiar with three main factors in the classroom environment: teachers, friends (peers), and study materials (textbooks). It is thought that one of these textbooks—social studies—is (or can be) an effective and appropriate tool in explaining the understanding of children’s rights to students. Because the life studies lesson is a data source, the rights of children will be better reflected, which will help them live more democratically in social life (Bakir & Akcan, 2021). The research materials belong to different publishers due to the Ministry of National Education’s periodic agreements with different publishers.

Data Collection Process

To analyze the life studies textbooks within the scope of children’s rights, we first examined the literature and attempted to recreate the research infrastructure. Then, the life studies textbooks were examined using Forster’s (1994) document analysis model, which consists of five stages (as cited in Yildirim & Şimşek, 2016). These five stages include: (1) accessing the documents; (2) checking the authenticity of the documents; (3) making sense of documents; (4) analyzing the data; and (5) presenting the analyzed data by using it in accordance with the research. Using the model, the researchers accessed the documents for this study from the Ministry of Education Board of Education and Discipline website and then checked the originality of these accessed documents. Afterward, we attempted a general interpretation of the documents and analyzed the data within the documents. In the final stage, the analyzed data were used for the purpose and sub-problems of the study.

The data were obtained by both study researchers in February and March of 2021. Data were then coded in separate places. After coding the data, the researchers discussed the codes once more and reached a consensus that was in line with expert opinion. A final conclusion was reached using the data in the context of research questions.

Data Analysis

The data of this study were subjected to content analysis, a systematic analysis technique used extensively in social sciences, where the data group is categorized and summarized using coding within determined limits (Büyükoztürk et al., 2013). According to another definition, content analysis is used to obtain systematic and objective results using the words and sentences of a chosen text (Stone et al., 1966, p. 213) to obtain valid results regarding the content of the data that are based on the data (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 25). Based on these definitions, the following steps were taken:

- Data research was created by examining—in detail—the study materials within the scope of the purpose of the study.
- Coding was created by the researchers to be in line with the meanings determined by the analysis, which consisted of life studies textbooks and the contents and titles of UNCRC articles

The analysis stages were carried out as follows: (a) data was coded; (b) themes were identified; (c) themes were arranged according to the codes, which were placed under the appropriate themes; and (d) findings were identified and interpreted.

In the coding process, the codes obtained—based on the Miles & Huberman (1994) model—were used to simplify and reveal the essence of the findings. The LSTs were examined in line with the problems of the research, and the findings in the context of children’s rights were searched. Attention was paid to the presence of discourses on children’s rights, as well as the intensity of expression of these discourses, in which the theme of the LST was heavily involved. Then, the findings were transferred to the tables. Afterward, the findings were interpreted.

During the analysis, positive data were expressed with a (+) sign and negative data with a (-) sign. In the research, the data were revealed and the codes and themes created afterward were interpreted under the heading of findings. The obtained data were analyzed and the result was reached.

Reliability Measures

While the reliability of the research was questionable, the purpose of the study was clearly stated. Also, the stages of data collection and analysis were carefully implemented, based on the purpose of the study. In addition, the researchers evaluated the data they collected at separate times and places. Then, they worked together to evaluate their findings.

The Role of Researchers

Both authors contributed equally to this research and assumed the role of an active researcher in the study process.

Ethical Issues

All of the rules stated in the “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive” were carefully followed at all stages of this research, including planning-research-analysis-evaluation-result. No steps have been taken against scientific research and publication ethics. In addition, this research does not require an ethics committee decision as it is based on a document/document review, which does not require participants.

Findings

The research findings were created by examining the LSTs in detail. The important findings (in terms of children’s rights) were then recorded and transferred to Tables 1 and 2. Lastly, the findings were interpreted.

Table 1. Codes Regarding the Theme of Formation of Perception of Child Rights

Codes	1st Grade LST	2nd Grade LST	3rd Grade LST
Right to education	-	-	-
Expressing opinions and right to participate	+	+	+
Basic rights awareness, the right to life, and the right to protection	+	+	+
Universal human rights	-	-	+
Education incentive code	+	-	+
Right to health	-	-	-
Child’s best interest code	+	+	+
Children’s right to play and entertainment	+	-	-

Codes Regarding the Theme of Formation of Perception of Child Rights

Findings on the “right to express opinions and participation” were obtained in all three life studies textbooks (LSTs). The codes were reached using the following statements from the texts:

LST 1: “Let’s determine these rules together. What are your suggestions? I will take turns giving the word to those who raise their hands.”

LST 2: “We should attend classes and in-class activities, we should not hesitate to express our opinions” and “you should all participate in decision-making processes on classroom issues. You should give your opinion. If you don’t talk, we won’t know what you’re thinking.... You have to be respectful of different opinions and suggestions.” (Note: Regarding this right, the second text had more remarks pertaining to “right to express opinions and participation” than the others.)

LST 3: “Thanks to the wish boxes in schools, we can express our ideas easily. We are allowed to exercise the freedom to express our thoughts.”

The findings from all three textbooks form the understanding that there are enough statements about the “right to participate.” It can be deduced from the expression of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Çelikaş, et al., 2019) that “great importance [is given] to human rights and freedoms...” (p. 75). Sufficient evidence has been reached in all LSTs (LST 1-2-3) on the awareness of fundamental rights.

We determined that the statements regarding “the right to education” were not included in all three textbooks examined, although emphasis was placed on encouraging education. For example, LST 3 includes the statement: “Everyone has the right to receive education under equal conditions.” At the same time, the emphasis on the “importance of respecting rights” is included in the examined LSTs. LST 3 states: “We must respect the rights of our friends.”

When we examined the remaining rights, we determined that “the right to life” (which is one of the fundamental rights), the child’s “best interest” principle, and the “right to protection” are emphasized in all three textbooks. There is no expression or emphasis on “the right to health.” As for the “right to play and entertainment,” only LST 1 mentioned this right.

Table 2. Findings Concerning the Theme of Fundamental Rights of Migrants and Children With Special Needs

Codes	1st Grade LST	2nd Grade LST	3rd Grade LST
Immigrant children’s right to education	+	+	+
Right to education of children with special needs	+	+	-
Right to life	-	+	+
Right to live in safety	-	-	+
Equality belief code and unconditional admission code	+	+	+
Right to participate	+	+	+

Codes Regarding the Fundamental Rights of Immigrants and Children With Special Needs

Findings on the “right to education” for immigrants were obtained in all three life studies textbooks (LSTs). The codes were reached using the following statements from the texts:

LST 1: “Salaam aleykum. I’m Vala. I came to Turkey this year from Syria with my family. I am just learning Turkish. I am very happy to be with you.”

LST 1: “We live together with people from different cultures who immigrated to our country due to optional reasons, such as job situation or compulsory reasons, such as war.”

At the same time, the findings regarding the “principle of unconditional acceptance” by always respecting those who are different—and in different situations—were as follows:

LST 1: “Friends, the food, clothes, living habits of people who have migrated to our country, either compulsorily or voluntarily, may be different from ours. Let’s not forget that they have habits according to the characteristics of the places they come from. Let’s respect differences.”

LST 2: “People from different cultures live together in our country. Some of these people have been forced to leave their country. Some voluntarily immigrated to our country.”

LST 3: “We must help people who have immigrated to our country from foreign countries, we must act justly. We must support them to adapt to our country. We must respect their habits, their lives.”

Also, an example of the findings on “living safely” and “the principle of equality” is as follows:

LST 3: “People may migrate to other countries for reasons, such as work and education. People migrate to other countries for compulsory reasons, such as war. Whether these people immigrate for compulsory or voluntary reasons, they are forced to live in a foreign country. They suffer because they do not know the language and habits of the country they migrate to.”

When we look at the expressions in the 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-grade LSTs, we can deduce that migration is a natural phenomenon, that there are immigrants in our country, and that migrant children also have various rights, especially education.

Regarding the findings on “the rights of children with special needs,” the codes were reached using the following statements from the texts:

LST 1: “Hello. I’m Efe. I’m in 1/C class. I love my school, my friends, and my teacher. I use a wheelchair.”

LST 1: “We should be careful with our friends who use devices, such as hearing aids. We should not give names and nicknames to our friends with different characteristics.”

LST 2: “I have difficulty in explaining my physical characteristics due to my speech disability.”

LST 2: “We may have friends with different characteristics than us. We must accept these friends as they are. We must respect individual differences.”

In summary, it was emphasized that children with special needs also have the right to study in the same environment as their peers with normal developmental levels and should be respected in the 1st- and 2nd-grade LSTs expressions. However, the 3rd-grade LST showed no such finding.

Table 3. *Frequency Values of Expressions Regarding Child Rights in LST Themes*

Themes	1st Grade LST	2nd Grade LST	3rd Grade LST
Life in our school	7	10	6
Life in our house	0	0	0
Healthy life	0	0	0
Safe life	0	0	0
Life in our country	4	8	15
Life in nature	0	0	0
Total	11	18	21

When Table 3 is examined, it can be determined that “life in our country” is the theme with the highest number of expressions and findings related to children’s rights among the themes in the LSTs belonging to all three grade levels. This theme is followed by the “life in our school” theme with a total of 19 findings. In the theme of “life in our home,” the textbook containing the expression of children’s rights was the 3rd-grade LST. In the remaining themes of “healthy life,” “safe life,” and “life in nature,” no findings or statements regarding children’s rights were encountered. When looking at total values, we see that “children’s rights” had the least statements in the 1st-grade LST with a total of 11. There were 18 statements in total in the 2nd-grade LST. The highest number of statements on children’s rights were found in the 3rd-grade LST—21 in total.

Conclusion and Discussion

Based on the texts in the 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-LSTs, codes and themes were created with content related to children’s rights. It was determined that these codes have similar content and structure in each of the LSTs. In light of these findings, the three textbooks examined are closely in line with children’s rights.

The themes of “formation of the perception of children’s rights” and “educational rights of immigrants and children with special needs,” which were created from the language in the textbooks—and examined in the context of children’s rights—were determined to be the common point of LSTs, which are in line with the concept of children’s rights and presented as themes. Findings related to each theme were coded separately and expressed with symbols (+ or -) according to whether they were found in the textbooks at all three grade levels.

Formation of the Perception of Children’s Rights

A total of 10 codes were obtained within the scope of the theme of the formation of the perception of children’s rights. The status of these codes in LSTs is as follows:

Right to Education

No findings were found in LST for all three grade levels regarding the “right to education” code. It is thought that such a right of children may not have been included in the LSTs due to the idea that they already know or internalize it because they come to school.

Skills for Socialization

Osler and Starkey (1998) stated that schools should help children acquire “skills for socialization.” Therefore, it is thought that there is no content related to this right in the LSTs, which are teaching materials.

Expressing Opinions and Right to Participate

Regarding the codes of “expressing opinions” and the “right to participate,” findings are given in the textbooks in the form of “expressing ideas” and “active participation” when determining the classroom rules in the LSTs

for all three grade levels. On the subject, Osler and Starkey (1998) stated that when children are given the “right to participate,” they can challenge many injustices. It has also been stated that it is considered important for children to experience “expressing their opinions”—without being under pressure—to develop an understanding of their rights (Ruck et al., 1998). Also in the expressions in the LSTs for all three grade levels, it is emphasized that together with “the right to participate,” being able to “think freely” and “express these thoughts freely” is a child’s right. Erbay (2012) also emphasized in his work that children’s “right to participate” should be the main basis in all cases concerning children.

Basic Rights Awareness, the Right to Life, and the Right to Protection

Clear findings were found for the “basic rights awareness” code in the LSTs for all three grade levels. The codes of the “right to life” and the “right to protection,” which are within the scope of fundamental rights, are emphasized in the LST for all three grade levels, as well.

Right to Health

No findings could be reached in all three LST grade levels regarding the “right to health.”

Universal Human Rights

No findings were found in the 1st and 2nd grade LSTs related to the “universal human rights” code, but a finding related to this code was found in the 3rd grade LST.

Education Incentive Code

The “education incentive code” was encountered in the LSTs for the 1st and 3rd grades. No findings related to this code were found in the LSTs for the 2nd grade. According to UNICEF (2019b), in every country, every child has the right to receive an education, even a quality education beyond just being in the classroom. Ensuring that they know and learn these natural rights imposes responsibilities on all units and materials of education. Therefore, it is considered important to emphasize that education is a right for children in LSTs belonging to all three grade levels.

Child’s Best Interest Code

The main principle in the Child Protection Law has been “the best interests of the child,” a concept that takes concrete events into account but is still abstract. At the same time, the best interest of the child is to give priority to the child and the child’s interests when the best interests of the child are contradicted (UNICEF, 2014). The “child’s best interests code” was found in all three grade level LSTs.

Children’s Right to Play and Entertainment

Regarding “children’s right to play and entertainment,” only the 1st grade LSTs mentioned this right. The “Children’s Right to Play and Entertainment” code is protected by Article 31 of the UNCRC, and it is expressed as follows: “Every child has the right to play and enjoy equal opportunities, wherever they are in the world.” Article 31 states that:

1. Parties to the Convention recognize the right of the child to rest, enjoy his free time, play and participate freely in age-appropriate entertainment and cultural and artistic life.
2. Parties to the Convention, the child’s culture, art, leisure, recreation, etc. respect and encourage full participation in these areas.

Fundamental Rights of Immigrants and Children With Special Needs

A total of six codes were obtained within the scope of the education rights of immigrants and children with special needs. The status of these codes in LSTs is as follows:

Education Open to Everyone

No findings were found in the LSTs in all three grade levels. The expression code, “education open to everyone,” was not found in the textbooks (although it was explicitly sought out). It is possible to implicitly deduce meanings for this code, but for students who are in the concrete operational stage, it is always preferable to have clear expressions (Atkinson, 2005; Atkinson et al., 1990; Çarkit, 2019; Yavuzer, 1999).

Immigrant Children’s Right to Education

Findings were obtained in the LSTs of all three grade levels for the code of “immigrant children’s right to education.” It was noteworthy that these findings were especially included under the theme of “life in our school.” Considering that the school is an institution where educational activities are carried out, the expression of immigrant children under this theme was found to be effective in expressing to all children that they also have the right to education. According to Kepenekci (2000), the creation of an environment that respects human rights by all stakeholders in the school makes it easier for students to practice their rights.

At the same time, Turkey is a country where people from many different ethnic backgrounds prefer to migrate (Koç & Solmaz, 2019). Syria and Iraq are the leading countries from which Turkey receives immigration, followed by countries such as Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Russia, and Egypt (Turkish Statistical Institute, n.d.). Due to migration, Turkey is turning into a country of immigrants. And among these immigrants, Turkey specifically bears the responsibility for the rights of children (Akcan, 2022c; Sirkeci & Yüceşahin, 2014). Based on this statement, it is thought that the emphasis on immigrant children and their fundamental rights is also important in textbooks, which are one of the effective materials for teaching.

Right to Education for Children With Special Needs

Findings related to the code of “right to education for children with special needs” were obtained in 1st- and 2nd-grade LSTs, but such a finding could not be reached in the 3rd-grade LST. It is of great importance to instill the awareness that individuals with special needs have all other rights—especially the right to education—as a child, for all students. Seyhan and Akduman (2015) also emphasized that every child has the right to live and develop in a healthy environment, and it is important for them to be included in the social life and education process with equal opportunities as other children.

Equality Belief Code and Unconditional Admission Code

Findings regarding the “equality belief code” were obtained in the LSTs belonging to all three grade levels. It is thought that there was an adequate expression, in the textbooks, that every child has equal rights and can benefit from education and training equally.

It has been determined that the findings regarding the “unconditional admission code” are included in the LST belonging to all three grade levels. Children’s knowing that they have rights—as well as knowing that other children have rights and accepting them as they are—constitutes an important context of children’s rights. According to the findings obtained from various studies, it is stated that children do not know or reject the principle of unconditional acceptance in the emergence of certain problems regarding the unconditional acceptance of children with special needs and immigrant children (Bozkurt, 2022; Bramston et al., 2002; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; Pijl et al., 2008; Soresi & Nota, 2000; Temir, 2002; Yavuz, 2005). The findings in the LSTs were found to be sufficient by the researchers in this regard.

Frequency Values of Expressions Regarding Child Rights in LST Themes

When the data were examined regarding the “frequency values of expression” about children’s rights in the LST themes (as seen in Table 3), it was found that the data did not show a regular theme distribution. It is thought that the expression of children’s “rights in our school,” within the scope of the theme of life, is because the theme includes topics that can express children’s rights.

Within the scope of the theme of “life in our home,” no findings could be found in the 1st- and 2nd-grade LSTs; one finding was reached in the 3rd-grade LST. Within the scope of the themes of “healthy life,” “safe life,” and “life in nature,” no findings related to children’s rights could be reached in the LSTs belonging to all three grade levels. It is thought that these themes are not expressed because they do not include issues to be associated with children’s rights.

In Turkey, the “scope of life” theme was reached in all three grades. Four findings were reached in the 1st-grade LST, six in the 2nd-grade LST, and 13 in the 3rd-grade LST. Within the scope of this theme, it is thought that the expressions about children’s rights contain intense content, as in the theme of “life in our school,” because the theme contains parallel topics that can express children’s rights.

When the themes in the LSTs are examined, we determined that the findings on children’s rights do not show an equal distribution of the themes. The most striking situation regarding the total findings on children’s rights, in LSTs belonging to each grade level, is that as the grade level progresses, the findings on children’s rights increased in parallel with this increase in LSTs. The reason for this seems to be due to the awareness that the concept of rights will increase as the age level increases, and the concept of rights will gain familiarity gradually. At the same time, it is thought that their understanding and knowledge of children’s rights should be increased gradually, since some important lessons that can help in creating a democratic social order, in terms of aims and vision, are included in the 4th grade in primary education, where information is transferred in terms of “being responsible,” “knowing ones rights,” and “being an effective citizen” (Kuzucu, 2018).

In summary, the LST textbooks, in all three grade levels, do not contain enough information and findings within the scope of the UNCRC’s articles and children’s fundamental rights. We found that in some themes, children’s rights were intensely expressed, while in other themes, the expression of children’s rights was not included. In addition, we determined that there are findings on the concept of children’s rights in the texts of LSTs, but these concepts are not sufficient for children to adopt. Article 42 of the CRC emphasizes the necessity of knowing the rights of the child by all individuals, with the statement: “States parties to the Convention ensure that the articles in the Convention are learned by everyone” (CRC, 1989).

School is one of the important institutions where children learn about their rights. And the most effective material is textbooks (Dağ et al., 2015). At the same time, the findings around children’s rights in the themes included in LST are very scattered, and we determined that there is no balanced distribution.

Childhood education is very important to becoming citizens who know their rights and who understand how to protect these rights. Campbell & Covell (2001) also concluded in their study that children’s rights to education, given at an early age, improves the child’s respect for their rights along with their personality development.

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