

Cultural Heritage in Social Studies Curriculum and Cultural Heritage Awareness of Middle School Students*

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Abstract

The present study aimed to determine the cultural heritage elements in the social studies course curriculum in Turkey and the awareness of the middle school students about cultural heritage. In the study, the case study approach, a qualitative research design, was adopted. The study group was assigned with criterion sampling method, a purposive sampling approach. The study findings demonstrated that the cultural heritage elements were prominent in 4th grade and 5th grade curricula, respectively, and the least prominent in 6th and 7th grade curricula based on the social studies course curriculum achievements in Turkey. The middle school students associated cultural heritage with historical buildings the most in the physical historical heritage category and customs and traditions in the non-physical historical heritage category. Students mostly considered mosques as physical cultural heritage elements, followed by palaces, towers, castles, madrasahs, bridges, historical buildings, historical places, fountains, and customs and traditions, traditional dishes, oral traditions, performance arts, and crafts as non-physical cultural heritage elements. Students mostly reported that cultural heritage was important since it was inherited from ancestors, it allows us to learn the past events, it reflects us, not to forget the old times, it is our culture, it is our history, for the perpetuity of our state, to learn about past lessons, and they stated that the cultural heritage should be preserved by state protection, followed by allowing it to live on, raising awareness, claiming it as a heritage, remembering, warning, and punishment, respectively.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Social Studies, Curriculum, Middle School Students

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is a very broad concept that reflects society and every society has its own culture. Several aspects of culture, including social way of life and customs and traditions, are the components of culture. Societies may possess certain cultural characteristics, or the society may include the characteristics of various cultures. Culture, which is a unifying element in society, could be sustained throughout time. The preserved cultural structures could be considered as cultural heritage. Cultural heritage elements are significant since they reflect society and its social characteristics. According to Kokko & Dillon (2011), humans have produced certain elements to sustain their lives. The traditional elements sustained throughout history and connect the society to a particular way of life and could be called the cultural heritage. According to Tweed & Sutherland (2017), cultural heritage is an urban feature that reflects the unique structure of a city and provides a sense of belongingness for the people.

Cultural heritage could be both physical and non-physical. There are tangible or intangible cultural heritage elements that reflect the unique characteristics of a society, including visible, tangible elements that reflect that culture in physical structures. Among these elements there are historical architectural buildings for example. Non-physical cultural heritage items include traditions and customs, ideas and ways of life particular to that culture. According to Gürbüz (2019), physical cultural heritage elements include historical buildings and sites, and non-physical cultural heritage elements include traditions, weddings, customs, and holidays. Cultural elements provide information about our past and civilization according to Deren (2006). Cultural heritage may include archaeological structures, buildings, natural resources, religious elements, traditions, oral and written works, and handicrafts. According to Ar (2015), non-physical cultural heritage elements reflect the way of life in a society. Thus, they shape society. Cultural heritage elements are not permanent according to Şentürk (2012). It depends on the period they were created. Each period has a particular cultural heritage perspective.

The importance of cultural heritage for the perpetuity of society is indisputable. Thus, efforts to preserve the cultural heritage and raise awareness have accelerated in recent years. The cultural heritage topic was included in several courses given through the education system, and raising awareness from early ages was prioritized. The social studies course is one of the important courses in this respect. Thus, cultural heritage was included in the social studies curriculum and textbooks. It is important for active instruction of cultural heritage to determine the degree of the inclusion of cultural heritage, which is important for the perpetuity of the unique structure of the society, elements in the social studies curriculum, which is one of the courses with a high level of content, and to determine the awareness of the social studies students about cultural heritage. Determination of the cultural heritage element included in the social studies curriculum could be considered important to identify the problems encountered in social studies instruction. Furthermore, the determination of the awareness of the 5th, 6th and 7th grade students, who take the social studies course is given, about cultural heritage is important for younger generations. Because, it is important to increase the awareness of middle school students about cultural heritage to allow them to recognize their own culture and other cultures and transfer the culture from one generation to another by preserving cultural heritage elements. Thus, the present study aimed to determine the cultural heritage elements in the social studies course curriculum in Turkey and the awareness of the middle school students about cultural heritage.

The literature review revealed several studies on cultural heritage. Certain studies were conducted on arts and cultural heritage (Hoffman, 2006), construction of cultural heritage (Tweed & Sutherland, 2007), conservation of cultural heritage (Stanco, Battiato & Gallo, 2011), non-physical cultural heritage (Lenzerini, 2011), handicrafts as a demonstration of cultural heritage (Kokko & Dillon, 2011), cultural heritage programs and education (Curtis & Seymour, 2004), the correlations between cultural heritage and certain variables (Arıkan, 2012; Bozok, 2018), non-physical cultural heritage and college students (Çelebi, 2016), the impact of cultural heritage education on student attitudes towards physical cultural heritage (Dönmez & Yeşilbursa, 2014). Based on the social studies

course, certain cultural heritage studies were conducted on the role of non-physical cultural heritage in the social studies curriculum (Çengelci Köse, 2012), activity-based action research for non-physical cultural heritage education in primary school social studies course (Sağ, 2018), measurement of the readiness levels of primary school 7th grade students for the awareness about cultural heritage conservation (Karip, 2012), the analysis of the secondary school 6th grade social studies textbook based on cultural heritage sensitivity (Taşdemir, 2018), the student perceptions on sensitivity to cultural heritage included in social studies curriculum (Kılcan & Akbaba, 2013), student and teacher views on cultural heritage education in social studies course (Avcı, 2014), and the determination of the views of social studies teachers on non-physical cultural heritage education (Özlek, 2019). However, there are no studies in the literature that aimed to determine the cultural heritage elements in the social studies curriculum in Turkey and the awareness of the middle school 5th, 6th and 7th grade students, who take courses about cultural heritage. Curricula constitute a vital part of educational systems. As a result of the study, both the inclusion status of cultural heritage elements researched in this study in social studies curriculum, and the awareness of middle school students about this subject will be determined, as a result of which more concrete information will be obtained in terms of determining the status of cultural elements subjects in the social studies course. When the studies conducted within the scope of social studies course were examined, it was observed that these studies generally examined one aspect of education, that is, the status in the curriculum, or students' perceptions, or tangible and intangible cultural heritage. With the present study, it is expected that a big gap will be filled in the field as the study will both examine cultural heritage elements in the social studies curriculum and determine students' perceptions in this regard.

The Aim of the Study

This study aims to determine the cultural heritage items in all social studies curricula (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades) and the awareness of the 5th, 6th and 7th grade middle school students about cultural heritage. In the study, all social studies curriculum in all grade levels in Turkey were analyzed. However, since the sample group consisted of middle schools students, the 4th grade level in Turkey was not included in the examination. In order to determine cultural heritage elements in the curriculum as a whole, the 4th grade level was not excluded, and the curriculum was analyzed for all grade levels. Thus, the following research questions were determined.

- Which cultural heritage elements are included in all grade levels (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade) of the social studies curricula?

According to 5th, 6th and 7th grade students,

- What does cultural heritage mean?
- What are the elements of cultural heritage?
- Why is cultural heritage important?
- What should be done to preserve cultural heritage?

METHOD

The Research Design

The present research is a case study, a qualitative study design. Qualitative research generally includes phenomenology, cultural analysis, case studies (Merriam, 2013), theory development and action research designs (Saban & Ersoy; 2016; Creswell, 2018; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011;). The case study is an “*empirical research method (1) where a current case is studied within the framework of its*

life (content), (2) the boundaries between the case and its content are not clearly defined, and (3) there are more than one evidence or data” (Yin, 1984, cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 277).

The Study Group

The study group was assigned with criterion sampling, a purposive sampling method. According to Patton (1987), “the purposive sampling method allows an in-depth study of cases that include rich information” (Cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 107). In criterion sampling, “the basic aim is to study all cases that meet a set of predetermined criteria” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 112). The social studies course curriculum, which is one of the courses where cultural heritage elements are predominantly included, and the 5th, 6th and 7th grade students, who typically take the course, were included in the study sample. The distribution of the study group students by grade level is descriptively presented below.

Grade	Female	Male
5.	8	7
6.	16	18
7.	12	14

Data Collection and Analysis

The study data were collected with document analysis and interviews. The social studies curricula data were collected with document analysis. During the document analysis, the 2018 social studies curricula achievements in all grades were analyzed based on the cultural heritage elements. The collected data were tabulated by grade and learning areas, and then the findings were interpreted.

Data were collected from the students through interviews. The interview method was selected to deeply investigate the awareness of the students about cultural heritage. Before the interviews, open-ended questions were prepared. These questions were then presented to the experts and adjusted according to the experts’ views. Before applying questions, permission was obtained from the school administration, and the interviews were conducted with the students to determine the student views.

The study data were analyzed with content analysis. In the content analysis, the codes were determined based on the social studies curricula data in Turkey, student views, and the research questions. The developed codes were interpreted based on categories and sub-categories.

Validity and Reliability

During the development of the interview questions, the author determined a pool of questions. The researcher created 7 questions in the preliminary phase of the study, and later, the questions were analyzed within the scope of the study and the final research questions were formed. Thus, the content validity of the research questions were tried to be ensured. In addition, in order to enhance content validity of the research questions, expert opinion was obtained. The questions were presented to two social studies experts and a measurement and evaluation expert to determine the suitability of the questions for the scope of the research, and the questions were finalized based on the expert opinion. 6 questions were presented to expert opinion, but in line with the opinion obtained from the experts regarding one question not being suitable, research questions were reduced to 5 questions. The reliability coefficient between the responses obtained from the experts and the researcher was calculated according to Miles & Huberman (1994) to be *Agreement: (agreement + disagreement) / (5 + 1) = 0.83*.

In the analysis of the curriculum data and student views, an external expert analyzed a section of curriculum data and student views to determine whether the analyses were accurate and the codes

were included in adequate categories, and the agreement between the external expert and the author was calculated. Thus, the Miles & Huberman (1994) reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.93.

FINDINGS

The findings of the research question “Which cultural heritage elements are included in all grade levels (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade) of the social studies curricula” are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Cultural heritage elements in social studies curricula

4 th grade	Cultural Heritage Element	Learning Area	f
	Museum	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Mosque	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Tomb	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Bridge	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Madrasah	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Caravanserai	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Traditional children’s games	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Clothing	“Global connections”	1
	Food	“Global connections”	1
	Games	“Global connections”	1
			10
5 th grade	Cultural Heritage Element	Learning Area	f
	Historical buildings	“Culture and heritage”	3
			3
6 th grade	Cultural Heritage Element	Learning Area	f
	Epic story	“Culture and heritage”	1
	Inscription	“Culture and heritage”	1
			2
7 th grade	Cultural Heritage Element	Learning Area	f
	Guilds	“Production, distribution and consumption”	1
			1

As seen in Table 1, the review of the achievements in social studies curricula for all grade levels demonstrated that cultural heritage elements were included in the 4th grade (f10) and 5th grade curricula the most (f3), and in the 6th grade (f2) and 7th grade (f1) curricula the least. In the 4th grade, cultural heritage elements included the museum (f1), mosque (f1), tomb (f1), bridge (f1), madrasa (f1), caravanserai (f1), traditional children's games (f1), clothes (f1), food (f1) and games (f1), in the 5th grade, cultural heritage elements included historical buildings (f1), in 6th grade, cultural heritage elements included epic stories (f1) and inscriptions (f1), and in the 7th grade, cultural heritage elements included guilds (f1).

Direct quote samples on cultural heritage elements included in the social studies curricula are presented below:

6th grade -“Cultural Heritage”: “Epic stories, inscriptions, and other resources are utilized.”

5th grade -“Cultural Heritage”:“A historical site such as a museum, mosque, tomb, bridge, madrasa, caravanserai in the vicinity could be visited, or an oral history or local history study could be conducted.”

4th grade - “Cultural Heritage”:“Traditional children's games are compared with current games based on variations and continuity.”

The findings of the research question “What does cultural heritage mean?” are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The views of middle school students on the concept of cultural heritage

Physical cultural heritage	f	Non-physical cultural heritage	f		f
Historical buildings	11	Customs and Traditions	f	Handicrafts	f
	11	Customs and traditions	8	Regional dresses	4
Mosques	f	Manners and customs	6	Tile art	2
Mosque	3	Kissing the hands of the elderly	2	Marbling art	2
Şehzadebaşı Mosque	2	Serving salted coffee to the bridegroom	1	Rugs, carpets	1
Selimiye Mosque	2	Sacrificing an animal	1	Calligraphy	1
Fatih Mosque	1	Holiday greetings	1		10
Süleymaniye Mosque	1	Weddings	1	Performance arts	f
Kurşunlu Mosque	1	Holidays	1	Drama	5
	10	Moral law	1	Foklore	1
Castles	4		22		6
Cappadocia / Tent rocks	2	Traditional food	f	Oral traditions	f
Ahmet III Fountain	2	Traditional food	6	Folk songs	2
Monuments	1	Pasturma	5	Proverbs	2
Madrasahs	1	Dumplings	2	Idioms	1
Ottoman Houses	1	Soujouk	2		5
Rumelian Fortress	1		15		
Palaces	F	Values	f		
Topkapı Palace	1	Values	5		
	1	Unity	2		
		Love	1		
		Respect	1		
		Moral values	1		
		Cultural values	1		
		Hospitality	1		
			12		

As seen in Table 2, the views of the middle school students on the concept of cultural heritage were grouped in two main categories: physical cultural heritage and non-physical cultural heritage. In physical cultural heritage category, students mostly mentioned historical buildings (f11), followed by mosques (f10), castles (f4), Cappadocia / tent rocks (f2), Ahmet III Fountain (f2) and only one student mentioned monuments (f1), madrasahs (f1), Ottoman Houses (f1), Rumelian Fortress (f1) and palaces (f1).

Direct quotations from student statements are presented below:

7th grade-F-12: “It is about the fact that the ancients cared about us and loved us and left the cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is the historical legacy of the ancients.”

6th grade -M-8: “They are historical artifacts left by our ancestors.”

7th grade -F-4: “First of all, cultural heritage evokes our country. In other words, these are places in important cities in our country. For example, Tent Rocks in Cappadocia ...”

Based on Table 2 above, in the non-physical cultural heritage category, the middle school students mostly mentioned traditions and customs (f22), followed by traditional food (f15), values (f12), handicrafts (f10), performing arts (f6), and oral traditions (f5).

Direct student quotations in non-physical cultural heritage category are presented below:

7th grade -F-12: *“These are the traditions and customs that we inherited from ancient civilizations. These were passed down from generation to generation.”*

6th grade -F-5: *“Cultural heritage is our values. If we do not protect these values, we would not know who we are. We can even lose our identity.”*

6th grade -F-15: *“Our holidays are the cultural heritage. We celebrate by kissing the hands of our elders on our holidays.”*

The findings based on the views of the students on the research question “What are the elements of cultural heritage?” are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The elements of cultural heritage based on middle school student views

Physical cultural heritage elements				Non-physical cultural heritage elements			
	f		f		f		f
Mosques	12	Castles	3	Customs and Traditions	11	Oral traditions	f
Mosques	12	Kayseri Castle	3	Holidays	11	Folk songs	4
Selimiye Mosque	2	Maiden’s Castle	1	Weddings	11	Poems	3
Süleymaniye Mosque	2	Castles	1	Customs and traditions	9	Proverbs	1
Hagia Sophia	2		5	Night of henna	9	Idioms	1
Sultanahmet Mosque	1	Madrasahs	4	Kissing hand	6		9
Fatih Mosque	1			Holiday greetings	5	Performance arts	f
	20	Bridges	3	Manners and customs	3	Folk dances	3
Palaces	f	Historical buildings	3	Religious traditions	2	Drama	2
Topkapı Palace	4	Historical sites	2	Bride holding her hand firmly when applying henna	1	Pontic folk dance	1
Palaces	2	Fountains	2	Serving salted coffee to the bridegroom	1	Ankara folklore	1
Dolmabahçe Palace	3	Bazaars	1	Wedding customs	1	Zeibek dance	1
	9	Turkish Hammam	1	Collecting candy on holidays	1		8
Towers	f	Minarets	1		60	Handicrafts	f
İzmir Tower	2	Atatürk’s Mausoleum	1	Traditional food	f	Traditional dresses	7
Galata Tower	1	Pool of Abraham	1	Food	11		7
Clocktower	1	Tombs	1	Dumplings	6	Values	f
Eiffel Tower	1	Caravanserai	1	Pasturma	4	Respect	2
	5	Towers	1	Soujouk	3	Solidarity	1
		Ottoman Houses	1	Doner Kebap	1	Love	1
				Stuffed grape leaves	1	Patriotism	1
				Kebab	1	Honesty	1
					27		6

As seen in Table 3, the views of the middle school students on the elements of cultural heritage were grouped into two main categories: physical cultural heritage and non-physical cultural heritage. Among physical cultural heritage elements, students mostly mentioned mosques (f20), followed by palaces (f9), towers (f5), castles (f5), madrasahs (f4), bridges (f3), historical buildings (f3), historical sites (f2), and fountains (f2), and only one student mentioned bazaars (f1), Turkish hammam (f1), minarets (f1), Atatürk’s Mausoleum (f1), Pool of Abraham (f1), tombs (f1), caravanserai (f1), towers (f1) and Ottoman Houses (f1).

Direct student quotations in physical cultural heritage elements category are presented below:

7th grade-M-1: *“Kayseri castle, Dolmabahçe palace, Hagia Sophia.”*

7th grade-M-7: *“Our cultural heritage, Dolmabahçe Palace, city walls, Izmir Castle, etc.”*

7th grade-M-4: *“Our Ottoman legacy, bridges, castles, etc. These are important as they are inherited from our ancestors. The cultural heritage cannot be damaged, when damaged it is punishable by law. We must pay attention to our cultural heritage.”*

As seen in Table 3, among the non-physical cultural heritage elements, students mostly mentioned traditions and customs (f60), followed by traditional food (f27), oral traditions (f9), performing arts (f8), handicrafts (f7) and values (f6).

Direct student quotations in non-physical cultural heritage elements category are presented below:

7th grade-F-2: *“The proverbs, idioms, folk songs, our culture are the information inherited from our elders. Our traditions, customs, dances, etc.”*

7th grade-F-2: *“Kissing the hand of our elders, holidays, weddings, folk dances, our traditions and customs.”*

7th grade-M-5: *“Engagements, circumcision and henna nights are the legacy of our ancestors.”*

7th grade-F-7: *“Our cultural elements are traditional things that our ancestors did and survived to the present day. For example, weddings, holidays, henna and customs and traditions. For example, in the past, relations between the neighborhoods were stronger, but now, no one knows even the next-door neighbor and does not visit when sick. In the past, the bride used to come on a horse for henna and wedding, and today they arrive in cars.”*

The findings based on the views of the students on the research question “Why is cultural heritage important?” are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Why cultural heritage is important based on middle school student views?

Reasons	f
It is the heritage of our ancestors	13
To know what has been done in the past	9
It reflects us	6
To remember old times	3
It's our culture	3
It's our history	2
For the perpetuity of the state	2
To learn from past experiences	2
These are historical artifacts from the past	1
It is our future	1
Without it, there would be no tourists	1
To defend the motherland and the nation	1
Without cultural heritage, we would be dependent on other countries and we could not be a state	1
To transfer to future generations	1
One of the values that hold a nation together is the cultural heritage	1
To improve our unity	1
To prevent the reduction of our culture	1
It reflects our ancestors	1
To improve social relations	1
Our ancestors fought for us	1
It is the national symbol	1
To learn the manners and customs of our ancestors	1
It was transferred from the past	1
To find the right path	1
To act on the example of our ancestors	1
To sustain our traditions and customs	1

As seen in Table 4, the students stated that cultural heritage was most important since it was inherited from our ancestors (*f13*), to know what has been done in the past (*f9*), since it reflects us (*f6*), to remember the old times (*f3*), since it is our culture (*f3*), since it is our history (*f2*), for the perpetuity of our state(*f2*), and to learn from past experiences (*f2*), and only one student mentioned it was important since it includes old historical artifacts (*f1*),since it is our future(*f1*), otherwise there would be no tourists (*f1*), to protect our country and our nation (*f1*), without cultural heritage, we would depend on other countries, we would not be a state (*f1*), to transfer to future generations (*f1*), since cultural heritage is one of the values that keep a nation alive (*f1*), to improve our unity (*f1*), to prevent the reduction of our culture (*f1*), since it reflects our ancestors (*f1*), to improve social relations (*f1*), since our ancestors fought for us (*f1*), since it is the national symbol (*f1*), to learn the customs and traditions of our ancestors (*f1*),since it was transformed from the past (*f1*), to find the right path (*f1*), to take the example of our ancestors (*f1*), and to sustain our traditions and customs (*f1*).

Direct student quotations on the importance of cultural heritage are presented below:

7th grade-F-2: *“Cultural heritage is important because it is old. For example, you have a record collection. You own it because it is old. This is similar, we should take care of it as it is our stuff.”*

7th grade-F-11: *“Cultural heritage is our past, the remains of our past. A society cannot move forward without knowing its past, language, religion, and ancestors. We should know our past so that we could know what we do is right or what we do is wrong, and we find the right path.”*

7th grade-F-2: *“It is important to see our past, to live it again, and to learn from our experiences. It is important to know the content of our culture. It is important to sustain our traditions and customs.”*

The findings based on the views of the students on the research question “What should be done to preserve cultural heritage?” are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The measures that should be adopted to preserve cultural heritage based on middle school student views

Conservation	f	Raising awareness	f
Security should be prioritized for conservation	6	Their significance should be instructed/explained to all generations	4
Historical sites should be protected	5	We should raise awareness among people around us	2
They should be assigned to museums for protection	3	The topic should be prioritized in social media	1
By conserving the earth	3		7
We should not pollute the environment	3	Claiming responsibility	f
We should preserve the environment	2	Claiming responsibility	5
We should avoid behavior that could damage them	2		5
We should not harm them	1	Reminders	f
We should preserve nature	1	Our cultural heritage should be promoted	2
We should protect the things that are the heritage of our ancestors	1	We could remind society frequently	1
We should secure them and keep them clean	1	We should commemorate them with respect and gratitude	1
Conscious use	1		4
	29	Warning	f
By sustaining them	f	Those who harm them should be warned	2
We should sustain the traditions	11	Warning signs should be posted to conserve our heritage	1
We should sustain them	5		3
We could organize activities	1	Punishment	f
	17	Those who harm them should be punished	2
			2

As seen Table 5, middle school students mostly stated that the cultural heritage should be preserved (*f29*), followed by it should be sustained (*f17*), awareness should be raised on cultural heritage (*f7*), the responsibility should be claimed (*f5*), it should be reminded (*f4*), perpetrators should be warned (*f3*) and punished (*f2*).

Direct student quotations on the measures that should be taken to conserve the cultural heritage are presented below:

7th grade-F-4: *“We should know our local dances and folk songs. Each region has different dishes and clothes. We collect candies and visit our elders on holidays. We commemorate our martyrs in appropriate occasions.”*

7th grade-F-2: *“We should promote our cultural heritage, visit them, sustain them, and experience our customs and traditions. We should tell about them to those who do not know and we should always support our cultural heritage to remember it.”*

7th grade-F-12: *“We should know, learn and remember local food and games. We should pass it on and teach it to future generations.”*

7th grade-M-3: *“First of all, everyone should not harm their own culture and heritage and should protect them. The punishment for damaging cultural heritage should be serious, and in this case, our cultural heritage would be harmed less.”*

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study that investigated the inclusion of cultural heritage elements in the social studies curriculum and the awareness of middle school students towards cultural heritage were as follows. The analysis of the achievements in social science curricula for all grade levels (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades) revealed that cultural heritage elements were included in the 4th grade curriculum the most, followed by the 5th, 6th, and 7th grade curricula. In the 4th grade curriculum, museum, mosque, tomb, bridge, madrasa, caravanserai, traditional children's games, clothes, food and games elements, in 5th grade curriculum, historical buildings, in the 6th grade curriculum, epic stories, inscription, and in the 7th grade curriculum, guild element were included. The review of cultural heritage elements at all grade levels revealed that the curricula mostly included physical cultural heritage elements. Furthermore, it should be noted that the number of cultural heritage elements decreased with the increase in student seniority. It could be suggested that cultural heritage achievements were inadequate in Turkish social studies curricula. According to Sağ (2018), cultural heritage includes the remnants of thousands of years of human experience. Cultural heritage should be prioritized in social studies courses and physical and non-physical cultural heritage elements should be instructed. According to Çengelci Köse (2012), sensitivity to cultural elements should be developed through education in social life. Furthermore, both physical and non-physical cultural heritage elements should be instructed. One of the courses that will contribute to this topic is the social studies course. Thus, cultural heritage elements could be included more in social studies curricula to improve the awareness of the students towards cultural heritage through education. Cultural heritage elements are the most important elements that reflect the societies and make the society what it is. As societies attach value to their cultural heritage elements, their social identities will not vanish, and they will maintain their existence.

The views of the middle school students on the concept of cultural heritage were grouped into two main categories: physical cultural heritage and non-physical cultural heritage. In the physical

cultural heritage category, students mostly mentioned historical buildings, followed by mosques, castles, Cappadocia / tent rocks, Ahmet III Fountain, and only one student mentioned monuments, madrasahs, Ottoman Houses, Rumelian Fortress, and palaces. In the non-physical cultural heritage category, middle school students mostly mentioned traditions and customs, followed by traditional food, values, handicrafts, performance arts, and oral traditions. According to Deren (2006), although cultural heritage means buildings and historical artifacts for most people, it is a very broad concept that includes several audiovisual products. For example, folk dances and symphonies by Mozart are all cultural heritage. According to Şentürk (2012), cultural heritage also includes traditions, stories and other values transferred from previous generations. According to Ar (2015), the traditions that were mentioned the most in the study were formed based on the geographical factors. Traditions are formed over several years and reflect the cultural wealth of society. Today, the significance of sustaining traditions has increased to the promotional needs of the nations. Furthermore, traditional food, which is considered as non-physical cultural heritage, is also an important cultural element according to Çapar & Yenipinar (2016). The analysis of the responses of the students about the meaning of cultural heritage revealed that they generally included domestic cultural elements. In this sense, since the study group included middle school students, that is, the opinions of young age groups on the subject, we can conclude that awareness of the students were firstly raised about their immediate surroundings. The education system also has an effect on this issue. Due to the fact that from near to far principle for young age groups, especially in the social studies course, has been adopted in the education systems in recent years, students' awareness and knowledge of their immediate surroundings are primarily developed. In this context, in addition to the principle of from near to far, students' perspective can be expanded by providing them with the knowledge about places other than their immediate surroundings.

The views of the middle school students on the elements of cultural heritage were grouped into two main categories: physical cultural heritage and non-physical cultural heritage. Among physical cultural heritage elements, students mostly mentioned mosques, followed by palaces, towers, castles (madrasahs, bridges, historical buildings, historical sites, and fountains, and only one student mentioned bazaars, Turkish hammam, minarets, Atatürk's Mausoleum, Pool of Abraham, tombs, caravanserai, towers, and Ottoman Houses. The student responses about the cultural heritage elements such as mosques and The Pool of Abraham demonstrated that the perceptions of the individuals on cultural heritage elements could differ from one society to another. For example, societies with different religious beliefs may express a different place of worship as a cultural heritage element. These cultural elements also constitute the common cultural heritage elements for the members of society. According to Bozok (2018), the elements that survived for centuries constitute the common social heritage. On the other hand, it is also important for individuals to learn cultural elements other than their own. Thus, they will respect differences. In order for especially young age groups to have awareness and knowledge about other cultures, which will contribute to gaining the value of respecting differences, cultural elements of different cultures can be included in the curricula, textbooks and in-class activities. In this way, students' knowledge and awareness of this subject can be improved.

Among the non-physical cultural heritage elements, students mostly mentioned traditions and customs, followed by traditional food, oral traditions, performing arts, handicrafts and values. According to Çelebi (2016), poetry and music considered within the oral traditions and performing arts categories are the most important reflections of national culture. The feelings, thoughts, desires, dreams and desires of the society are mostly reflected in these forms and shared with the society. Folk dances, which are among the performing arts, are also cultural elements that include details about the social lifestyle according to Ar (2015). According to Çengelci Köse (2012), oral traditions, expressions and performing arts are among the non-physical cultural heritage elements. Capar & Yenipinar (2012) included keshkek, mesir paste and Turkish coffee among cultural heritage elements. The promotion of these food items, cultures get closer and tourism income increases. The review of the present and past study findings demonstrated that non-physical cultural heritage elements could be quite diverse. Intangible cultural heritage elements can vary from society to society

or within different regions of a society. This can result from various factors such as religious beliefs, living in a different region, what is left from the cultures that previously lived in those regions, and the maintenance of these cultural elements in that region.

Cultural heritage is the memory of society. It is very important for the culture to survive and passed on to future generations. In recent years, several cultural heritage elements started to disappear. Thus, the attention to the concept of cultural heritage has increased to preserve the cultural elements (Arslan, Çağlar & Gürpınar, 2017). The following findings were obtained based on the student responses to the question of the significance of cultural heritage. The students stated that cultural heritage was mostly important since it was inherited from our ancestors, to know what has been done in the past, since it reflects us, to remember the old times, since it is our culture, since it is our history, for the perpetuity of our state, and to learn from past experiences, and only one student mentioned it was important since it includes old historical artifacts, since it is our future, otherwise there would be no tourists, to protect our country and our nation, without cultural heritage, we would depend on other countries, we would not be a state, to transfer to future generations, since cultural heritage is one of the values that keep a nation alive, to improve our unity, to prevent the reduction of our culture, since it reflects our ancestors, to improve social relations, since our ancestors fought for us, since it is the national symbol, to learn the customs and traditions of our ancestors, since it was transformed from the past, to find the right path, to take the example of our ancestors, and to sustain our traditions and customs. According to Taşdemir (2018), cultural heritage is the most important element that acts as a link between the past and the future and determines the future of society. Disconnections in this bond would affect all future generations; thus, attention should be paid to preserve the cultural heritage and ensure its transfer to future generations. Thus, children should learn the importance of cultural heritage at an early age and should be trained as conscious individuals for whom cultural heritage is important. Accordingly, education system should be analyzed, and deficiencies in this regard should be eliminated. Thus, individuals who own their culture and are sensitive and respectful towards different cultures can be raised.

On the protection of the cultural heritage, the middle school students mostly stated that the cultural heritage should be preserved, followed by it should be sustained, awareness should be raised on cultural heritage, the responsibility should be claimed, it should be reminded, perpetrators should be warned, and punished. Some nations, according to Taylor (2004), developed regulations and principles to support the conservation of the cultural heritage, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, the protection of cultural heritage was prioritized in tertiary education. The preservation of cultural heritage has been prioritized in several countries for many years according to Dönmez & Yeşilbursa (2014). Thus, countries aimed to preserve their cultural heritage through laws. Furthermore, the issue has been on the agenda of international institutions and organizations. Primarily UNESCO conducted significant studies. However, despite all these efforts, the preservation of cultural heritage is still insufficient. The significance of cultural heritage should be included in formal education to raise individual awareness. Especially the social studies course could include further activities on the topic. Also, according to Sağ (2018), a systematic action plan should be adopted for the preservation and dissemination of non-physical cultural heritage elements. Also, the issue should be prioritized in formal education, and the awareness of individuals towards this issue should be improved at an early age. The responsibility for this issue falls on many actors, from the family to the education system and the media. If all actors collaborate on this issue, emphasize cultural heritage education, preserve and maintain cultural heritage elements, and the deficiencies in this regard are eliminated, an important contribution to the preservation and maintenance of cultural heritage will be made.

The following recommendations are suggested based on the study findings:

The analysis of all grade achievements in the social studies curricula revealed that the achievements were insufficient on cultural heritage elements. Further achievements could be included in the social studies course curricula in future revisions. Furthermore, the emphasis on this issue could

be improved in social studies textbooks. Teachers could allow the students to conduct more activities on this subject during social studies instruction; thus, increasing student awareness on this issue.

Future studies could analyze awareness towards cultural heritage with students in other grade levels. Furthermore, textbooks could be revised to determine the shortcomings and improve the content on cultural heritage in the auxiliary course material.

In order to raise the awareness of young children towards this issue, further and more rich content could be included in the media. Thus, not only the educational content but also several media accessible by the students could include elements that would raise the awareness of cultural heritage.

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