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# The analysis of the factors affecting the acquisition and usage of the contemporary knowledge in the social studies education: families

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## Abstract

The present study was conducted with the aim of analyzing the methods of and the factors affecting the acquisition of contemporary knowledge in the social studies lessons in primary education programs according to the criteria required by the age of information. The research was done according to the survey model and the six schools in Bursa city. The participants of the study were the 2000 students in the aforementioned schools who were attending fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grades, 162 student families. The data were analyzed with SPSS 10.0 version. The data analysis was done with the following: frequency, correlation, regression, the reliability, way variance analysis analysis, descriptive statistics, q-square test, pearson q-square, kruskal wallis test, analysis, one, independent samples t-test. qualitative data were analyzed with frequency analysis. The results of the study showed that the factors such as socio-economic level, class level, sex, family, teacher and school administrators affecting the acquisition and usage of the contemporary knowledge in the social studies education.

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*Keywords:* Social studies education; contemporary knowledge; student; students' family.

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## 1. Introduction

Primary education institutions are significant stage in the training process of individuals, and the aim of primary institutions is to equip students with the basic knowledge. During primary education children meet many matters that they have to deal with socially. For instance, in organizational processes such as communicating with unknown adults in crowded places, queuing, forming a line, and waiting, which also require being talked to as a member of a group, obeying the restrictions related to matters such as movement and noise are some of these (Dean, 2000). All these things improve the social communication of a child. The aim of the Social Studies classes, in the scope of educational institutions and educational-training programs, is to raise students as efficient and responsible citizens, and equip them with the national culture. Primary education students start to learn about the society, regions, state, and the earth with the help of Social Studies Program. An educated individual is an individual who can determine his/her interests, areas and needs; who does not feel satisfied with getting information from only one

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source, but also knows where s/he can find that information, and how it can be recorded and used best, and also who can interpret and apply it, capable of getting into communication with ideas and data of various types. The general aim of the Social Studies lesson is to improve the skills of the individual related to events, conditions, and his/her environment, for efficient, successful, and right adaptation. In Turkey, Social Studies course is one of the most fundamental courses in helping students acquire information about the society and its problems, and to get them learn their responsibilities as citizens, and to help them understand human relations, and national characteristics (Kayalı, 2000).

Related to the Social Studies course the school, teachers, and parents of the students face a bunch of written and visual media as information acquisition sources such as course books of the knowledge, and relations with the rest of the world. While children get prepared for life they acquire their first and most important impression in the family and at school. The specialities s/he acquires in the family environment affect not only his/her education but also all his/her life. Family is important in determining the sharing level of child's school life. One of the essentials of the new training understanding is that students should not be limited with learning just at schools, but that learning in environments out of school is also significant, and thus, in order to strengthen the acquired information, and convert it into application, and assure its continuity; the family and environment should be occupying the same understanding with the school, and training services should be directed according to this principle. Nevertheless, this situation varies according to the socioeconomic statuses. While the socioeconomic condition of a student is examined the following variables widely determine the "social class": income level of the family, education and profession conditions of the parents, the location of the house in which they live, and the number of persons who live in the house.

## **2. State of the Problem**

The following sentence is the problem sentence of the study: "Does students' acquisition and use level of contemporary information in Social Studies course differ according to the factors related to family, socioeconomic status, and students' class stage (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> classes)?"

## **3. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the time that families allocate for communication with their children, who attend 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades at primary education schools of the Ministry of National Education, related to their school life and home works; the time they allocate for their children related to school is investigated generally according to deliberation time and related other subjects such as class level, and socioeconomic status. Family is important in determining the sharing level of child's school life.

## **4. Method**

As known, survey models are research approaches which aim at identifying a situation that used to be or still exists in the way it is (Karasar, 1998, 77). In this study, as it was aimed at evaluating the present situation, the model that was used to determine the factors which affect the acquisition and use of contemporary information in the Social Studies course is within the survey model.

## **5. Sample**

The subjects of the study are students who attend primary education schools of Ministry of National Education in Osmangazi, Yildirim, and Nilüfer districts of Bursa province, and their families. Considering the socioeconomic statuses, from totally 6 schools which represented upper, middle, and low SES randomly selected 2000 students of 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, and 162 student families were examined.

## **6. Data Collection Tools**

As data collection material Student Self-evaluation Questionnaire, which was prepared by the researcher, was used. The Cronbach Alfa Reliability Coefficient of the part of the questionnaire which was formed of Likert type

questions is .72. And, the Cronbach Alfa Reliability Coefficient of the Measurement Prepared for Student Families is .84. Student Families Interview Questions consist of open-ended and closed-ended questions which were forwarded during home visits and interviews. These questions were prepared to determine the situation of how parents perceive their children, how they communicate with them and what their expectations are.

## 7. Analysis of Data

In the analysis process of quantitative data SPSS program, and for the analysis process of qualitative data Excel programs were used. As it is known, qualitative data can be digitised in two ways: simple percent calculations, and word frequency calculations. Generally, the statistical calculations, and works carried out for data analysis and evaluation can be queued as follows: Frequency Tables, Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Analysis, achieving the best regression by step by step regression method, independence analysis by Chi-square test, and in the comparison of the variables of categorical data structure Pearson Chi-square was used. For comparison of more than two groups Kruskal Wallis Test and for Reliability Analysis Cronbach Alfa were used. Correlation calculations were done according to Spearman Correlation Coefficient. Additionally, with the single-variable analysis T-test with Independent sample was done. Responses were grouped separately and tabled. Variances and differentiations were examined in frequencies and percentages by separately putting them in tables.

## 8. Findings

While results were formed, various open-ended and closed-ended questions in “Measurement Tool for Student Families” and “Student Families Interview Questions Questionnaire”, and Student Self-evaluation Questionnaire were evaluated. Responses given to “Does the time of communication in families of students who attended 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades; the time they allocate for their children related to school, deliberation time and related other subjects, class level, socioeconomic statue differ?” were largely tabled.

Generally, educational level of parents of the students were determined, and examined in three different parts.

Table 1-Educational Level of the Parents

	Primary education and The illiterate ones		Secondary Education		Higher education	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Mother</b>	63	38,9	36	22	63	38,9
<b>Father</b>	57	35,2	32	19,8	73	45,1

Table 2- Educational Level of the Parents

Parent	Low SES* (%)			Middle SES (%)			High SES (%)		
	Primary school and lower	Secondary education	Higher education	Primary school and lower	Secondary education	Higher education	Primary school and lower	Secondary education	Higher education
Mother	67,6	21,1	11,3	45,2	38,7	16,1	0,5	16,2	83,3
Father	69,0	18,3	12,7	25,8	38,7	35,5	0	11,7	88,3

\*Socioeconomic Status

As it is seen in the table there is a significant difference between the educational level of the parents according to the socioeconomic statue (P 0,05). According to Table-1, it was determined that %39,9 of the mothers were graduated from higher education institutions, and that there were illiterate ones and the ones who graduated from primary schools with the same percentage. While majority of the fathers %45,1 graduated from higher education

institutions, the percentage of the ones who graduated from primary school is %35,2. There is difference between the children of high educational level and low educational level families with advantage for the first group. Regarding the results of the Test for Student Families, in order to determine whether there was a significant difference among the families of low, middle, and high level of SES, single-variable variance analysis was carried out and total point was taken into consideration.

Table 3-ANOVA results of the Test for Student Families

	Squares total	Independence level	Average	F	Significance level
Among groups	7130,213	2	3565,106	48,002	,000
Within groups	11808,898	159	74,270		
Total	18939,111	161			

As seen in the table, it was determined that there is a significant difference among families according to SES. However, in order to determine the source of the difference, comparison according to questions was done. Regarding the results of the Test for Student Families, in order to determine whether there was a significant difference among the families of low, middle, and high level of SES, each item of the test was examined using single-variable variance analysis. It was observed that in the 34 items of the test, which was formed of totally 42 items, there was difference at 0.05 level, and in the rest 9 items there wasn't.

While results related to families were formed, various questions, both open-ended and closed-ended questions, that were in "Measurement Tool for Student Families" and "Student Families Interview Questions Questionnaire" were evaluated. Regarding the results of the Test for Student Families, in order to determine whether there was a significant difference among the families of low, middle, and high level of SES, single-variable variance analysis was carried out and total point was taken into consideration. Communication time of student families regarding their school life and home works, expectations, and the manner of the child can be investigated together.

Table 6- Communication Time of Student Families Regarding their School Life and Home Works

	SCHOOLS					
	Low SES		Middle SES		High SES	
	F	%	f	%	f	%
After school	22	31,1	6	19,3	31	51,7
Before meal	5	7	3	9,7	5	8,3
During the meal	3	4,2	0	0	1	1,7
After meal	41	57,7	22	71	23	38,3

The majority of the student parents of low and middle SES schools indicated that they communicated with their children after meal, and most of the parents (%51,7) of high SES level indicated that they communicated with their children after school.

Table 6- The Time Families Allocate for their Children Related to School

	SCHOOLS					
	Low SES		Middle SES		High SES	
	F	%	f	%	f	%
Never allocate time	1	1,4	-	-	-	-
15 min.- half an hour	25	35,2	7	22,6	17	28,3
One hour	22	31	4	12,9	16	26,7
Longer than one hour	23	32,4	20	64,5	27	45

It was observed that %35,2 of the families in schools of low SES allocated 15 minutes- half an hour, and %64,5 of families of middle and high SES allocated longer than one hour. No significant difference was determined according to schools between the ones who allocated time for their children's school life and the ones who did not allocate time. In addition, a significant difference was revealed between student families who have a library and the ones who don't have. According to Kruskal-Wallis Test, a significant difference was observed according to schools between home-leaving hours of fathers. Regarding the income of student families and educational expenses according to SES, in order to investigate whether there was a significant difference, single-variable variance analysis was carried out. Generally, it was observed that there was a difference at 0.05 level. Monthly income and educational expenses of student families according to SES showed that although there wasn't difference between low and middle SES, it was possible to interpret significance between these two classes and high SES. Likewise, it is necessary to take into consideration the educational level of the parents regarding difference. Regarding the measurement tool for student families, when class differences are considered, whether there was a significant difference was investigated using single-variable variance analysis.

Table 7-ANOVA Results According to Class Levels Related to the Test for Student Families

	Square total	Independence level	Average	F	Significance level
Among groups	1575,046	5	315,009	2,830	,018
Within groups	17364,065	156	111,308		
Total	18939,111	161			

As it is seen in the table, generally a significant difference was found according to class levels. In order to determine the source of this difference each item of the test was investigated using single-variable variance analysis. It was observed that in the 19 items of the test, which was formed of totally 43 items, there was significance at 0.05 level, and in the rest 24 items there wasn't. A significant difference was observed between the educational expenses of families according to classes. However, according to chi-square values, there wasn't observed a significant difference between the 25<sup>th</sup> item and responses of families (.041). The calculated Pearson Chi-square values revealed that there was a significant difference between the total monthly income level according to classes. Regarding the factor of having a library, it was observed that 5<sup>th</sup> grade student families were majority (%76). It was determined that the families who don't have a library were mostly 6<sup>th</sup> grade students (%36,4). According to Pearson Chi-square values (.700) showed that the difference between the families who had libraries and who didn't according to grades wasn't significant. Regarding the communication time and deliberation duration that student families establish with their children related to their school life and home works, data attained from 162 student families were written according to the frequency level of the responses in relation with whether there was significance according class levels.

Table- 8 Communication Time of Student Families Related to their Children's School Life and Home Works according to Classes

	Fourth grade (%)	Fifth grade (%)	Sixth grade (%)	Seventh grade (%)
After school	38,3	30	36,4	48,1
Before meal	13,3	6	0	7,4
During meal	1,7	4	0	3,7
After meal	46,7	60	63,9	40,7

As it is seen in the table, except 7<sup>th</sup> grade, student families of other grades mostly talk about the subjects related to school after meal. Families of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students (%48,1) allocate time for matters related to their children's school life and home works when the student arrives home, after school. It was observed that most of the families of 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students allocate time after meal. Among the reasons of talking with their children's school life and home works right after school, regarding families of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, might be interpreted with the expectations to be successful at the Secondary Education Institutions Exam, which is held in the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Table 9- Deliberation Duration of Families Related to their children's School Life

	Fourth grade (%)	Fifth grade (%)	Sixth grade (%)	Seventh grade (%)
Never	0	0	4,5	0
15 min-half an hour	26,7	34	22,7	37
One hour	26,7	28	27,3	22,2
Longer than one hour	46,7	38	45,5	40,7

According to the table, deliberation duration of all student families related to children's school life is longer than an hour. Nevertheless, it was observed that families of students at 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades (over %45) had more time for that. In contrast, it was determined that % 4,5 of the families of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students reported that they never allocated any time, % 37 of the families of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students allocated between 15 minutes and half an hour. It is remarkable that although the expectations of parents increases towards upper grades, the time they allocate for them is quite low. According to the calculated Pearson Chi-square values a significant difference was observed between classes regarding the educational levels of mothers (p.014) and fathers (p.009). As it is seen in the table of educational levels of mothers and fathers according to classes, %51,7 of the mother of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students have completed their higher education. %42 of the mothers of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, %9,1 of the mothers of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, and %29,6 of the mothers of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students reported that they have completed their higher education. The mothers who are primary school graduates are mostly in 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Educational level of the mothers increases as their age decreases. While %58,3 of the fathers of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students are higher education graduates, %52 of the fathers of the 5<sup>th</sup> grades, %13,6 of the fathers of the 6<sup>th</sup> grades, and %29,6 of the fathers of the 7<sup>th</sup> grades have also received higher education. It was observed that most of the fathers of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students (%48,1) were primary school graduates. The educational level of fathers increases as their age decreases.

It has become apparent that differences in the individual developmental characteristics of the students taking the subject of Social Studies also play a role in their acquiring the behaviours which this program aims. For example, students with and without the feeling of responsibility differ from each other in the way they consolidate information by structuring it. While the attitudes and behaviours of students show differences according to their grades (especially in the sixth grade), those of families do not (especially between the fourth and seventh grades). In general, the percentage of families eating meals together with family members is 80, 2 % and the number is 130. It is observed that the number of families "sometimes" eating meals together is 32. Although the students whose mothers read books compose the majority, 21 % of them have mothers not reading at all. While the families letting their children make their own decisions form the majority (48, 1 %), the percentage of those sometimes letting is 36, 4 %, and that of those not letting is 15, 4 %. In the families with working members, it is observed that while the percentage of those stating that nobody is available at home to care for children is 65, 4 %, the percentage of those giving "yes" answer is 30, 9 %. It appears that student families mostly (%48,8) give "yes" answer to the question "Does the family make plans for the children regarding the activities such as homework assignment, game, sport, etc.?", and 27,2 % of them give "no" answer. As seen in the Table, the families communicating with their children within the day regarding in and out of school activities form the majority. 69, 9 % of the families state that they find their children talking reasonable. The number of families couples of which help each other at home is 74. It was found that the rates of those feeling themselves lonely, desperate and angry before works and that of those sometimes feeling this were the same (37 %). Families stated that they "sometimes" agree to the idea of upbringing their children with strict rules (35, 8 %). Families "sometimes" helping their children with their homework form the majority (46, 9 %). Besides all these, the duration of families' showing interest in their children carries importance as well.

Table 10- Duration of Student Families' Communicating with their Children regarding School Matters

Never allocate time		15 min-half an hour		An hour		More than an hour	
F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
1	6	49	30,2	42	25,9	70	43,2

While 43,2 % of the families stated that they allocate more than an hour concerning school matters, 6 % of them allocate no time.

Table 11- Time of Student Families' Communicating with their Children concerning School Matters



At home after school		Before meal		During meal		After meal	
f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
59	36,4	13	8	4	2,5	86	53,1

Table shows that families communicate with their children mostly after meal (%53,1).

It is seen that family members do not eat meal together most of the time ( $f=27$ ), allocate an hour or more to talk about school matters and the time of their interest is after meal. Regression analysis regarding student families' communicating with their children about school matters: Regression Equation:  $S_6 = 1.393 + 0.413 s_{34} + 0.311 S_{43} - 0.260 S_{37}$ . When three equations are taken together from the variance analysis (ANOVA) table, regression analysis appears important and its ability to explain S-6 increases ( $P=0.000^*$ ). When three variables are taken together, the change in S\_6 occurs at a rate of 19, 7 % ( $R \text{ Square}=0.197$ ) and according to t values and sig. values factors each have the ability to explain S\_6. Helping children with their homework, warning people damaging their environment and allocating a study room for children have effects on student families' communicating with their children. To determine the correlations between the items in which they are correlated with each other at 0.05 and 0.01 levels and the questions asked to 162 student families, correlation analyses were made as well. In regard to the correlation analysis made concerning the S-6 item (time allocation) of student families' answers, positive correlations were found between the variables at 0,05 level. Spearman coefficients vary between .18\* ile .19\*. Relationships were found between the families the children of which have computers at home and involve in social activities and families' asking for their children's opinions when making decisions at home and their allocating time for their children. Families exhibiting democratic attitudes involve in social activities. These families allocate a lot of time for their children. A strong relationship was found between families' communicating with their children about in and out of school activities and mothers' and fathers' educational levels.

## 9. Discussion and Conclusion

When taken into consideration the students' acquiring and using contemporary information in the lessons of Social Studies according to SES in the dimension of family, differences were observed. Concerning the results of the test given to student families, whether there are significant differences between lower, middle and upper SES families is examined for each test item by using one-variable analysis of variance. Between 34 items of the test composed of total 42 items, differences were found at 0.05 level but no difference was found between the other 9. When the sources of the differences were examined, it appeared that lower SES group differed from the other SES groups in respect of the items "*Who care for children at home in the families with working members?, Children regard their parent as superior to others, I help my children with their homework, The amount and quality of the homework given to my child create problems*". According to the sources of the differences, significant differences appeared between all the SES groups with respect to the items "*Education level of father, A newspaper is bought every day, There is a computer at home*".

In the study by Scott and O'Sullivan (2000), the statement of the students that they usually use the internet for half an hour to an hour supports the study. Low SES families were found to be uninterested in their children's school education and use repressive behaviour method (Özmen & Kolay, 2004; Voogd, 1998). Studies have shown that parents should believe in the importance of child upbringing (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1998; Kasatura, 2004), democratic discipline (Dean, 2000) and guidance (Elmacıoğlu, 2000) in terms of child development (Yavuzer, 2001). Types of the families differ depending on their socio-economic status levels (Elmacıoğlu, 2000). The child's relationships with family members underpin his/her attitudes towards other individuals, objects and the whole life (Güven, 1999). Dornbuch et al. (1987) concluded that gender, age, ethnic group and education level of the student parent plays an important role as well. The feedbacks which the school gave to the families might have played an important role in their communicating with their children about school matters. Hughes et al. (1994) stated in their report about the child's success at each school subject that 75 % of the student parents participating to their study asked for information. In the same study, some student parents ask for information about weak points. In the further background come the child's behaviour, social skills and information about his/her attitudes toward studying (Cited by Dean 2000; Lloyd, 2002). When the distribution of families with and without a library according to schools are considered, it appears that while the rates of having a library are 91,7 % and 80 %,6 at high and middle SES respectively, this decreases to 53,5 % at low SES. In the studies of Seyhan (2004) and Gander-Gardiner (2001), the findings obtained concerning the family's educational function and responsibilities, and those obtained by Kansu,

2005 about the family environment are in the direction of supporting the study. Data concerning participation to family decisions and democracy overlap with what Yalçinkaya, Şanlı (2003) and Uluğtekin et al. (2002) stated. Family is an important unit making important decisions that are likely to affect both its members and society. There are relationships between the ways of approaching to environmental problems (Güven, 1999), helping children with their homework (Dean, 2000) and education level of families. Children can not solve some tasks and problems by themselves (Wood, 1998). In the projects developed in the USA towards achieving school-family cooperation, families are attached great importance. In training of children, families are accepted as a partner of the school” (Özmen & Kolay 2004). As cited by Söğüt (2003) in the studies by Sarı (1986) the importance of the communication between school and family appear. According to Davies (1991), Stacey (1997) and Dean (2000), the child should be regarded as a child in parents-children relationships but a young man in the family having responsibilities and their own rights. Parents’ making daily study and living programs on behalf of their children and helping them implement these programs contributes to the development of internal discipline. Modern family is defined by modern sociologists as democratic family. Democratization of the relationships between women and men enables changes in the relationships between parents and children. Since nowadays most family members are working, it has become a necessity that students should adapt to this condition.

## 10. Suggestions

Students should be assigned responsibilities according to individual differences and characteristics. Individual and societal responsibilities should be developed. To have low and high SES students participate to different activities, their interest and abilities should be determined. It is necessary that families should assign their children with responsibilities and check if they can fulfil them. Since there are more students perceiving themselves as adults at middle and high SES, families and teachers should have expectations considering the age of children. Students’ behaviours are mostly controlled by their mothers. In this context, it is important that mothers should be conscious and educated. Moreover, students taking the subject of Social Studies should be able to control their behaviours by themselves. Students spend most of their time with their friends and families. Students should be able to be observed both in family and in social environment. Students should be guided to activities according the multiple intelligence areas where they are most close and their desires. Families should not put pressure on them about these matters. Instead of repressive family and school environments, democratic family and school environments should be created. Family members’ getting together and sharing a meal atmosphere will help maintain the relationships between family and school.

It was determined that those sharing time with their children at most are mothers. Families play a great role in students’ acquiring the habit of reading books. At low SES schools, courses are opened for student families to teach them how to write and read. Low SES family members should regard their children as individuals. Low SES families should be taught how to plan the activities for their children regarding the matters like their weekly homework assignments, games, etc. Being appreciated, accepted, and listened to are more effective in the acquisition of desired behaviours. Families should be taught how to establish empathy. Low SES student families form the group being able to provide their children with the least help with their homework assignments. Teachers should take into consideration this when assigning homework. For this reason, they should take feedback regarding how, where, why, and in what way students spend their out-of-school times and recommend accordingly, and check. There appear differentiations between the attitudes and opinions of the fifth grade students and the sixth grades. For this reason, it is necessary that the developmental characteristics and behaviours of the students in this period should be observed very carefully. Families usually encourage their children to behave like a responsible adult. Girls should be provided with computers as well. There is a relationship between families’ perceiving students’ homework assignments and their quality as having no problems and fathers’ reading books and appreciating their children when they do good things. It is necessary, in this context, that fathers should be encouraging. Fathers’ reading books a lot and appreciating their children when they do good things leads them to be more interested in their homework assignments and their quality and become more productive. Children should also be encouraged to read, make cooperation, show interest in music and art, play games, and make observations in addition to writing and using computer which are among the activities that children do most frequently within a week period spent outside of school. It is observed that conflicts usually occur between children and mothers. Families with lower SES are of the opinion that their children should care for them in the future. Nowadays, individuals are responsible for themselves. Families should have different expectations and become self-sufficient.



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