

High School Students' Attitudes Towards Geography Courses (Karabuk Sample-Turkey)

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to put forth high school students' attitudes towards geography lessons. The research group of the study is comprised of 200 students attending to high school students in Karabük in 2011-2012 educational years. As means of data collection " *Geography attitude scale* " developed by Aydın (2009) was used in this research in the frame of survey model. As the result of the study the gathered data were analyzed by SPSS 15 statistical programme in terms of frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, t test and one way variance analysis (ANOVA). When general expressions measuring general attitudes towards geography lesson, it is clear that 83.5 % of the students love geography. According to the results of the analysis, high school students' attitudes towards geography courses having no meaningful correspondence with their "gender" and "class level" variants.

Key words: Geography Course • Attitude • Gender • Class Level

INTRODUCTION

One of the variants affecting success in education is the attitude of the students towards the subject, school, teacher and similar items [1]. Related literature shows that the term "attitude" has so many definitions. Attitudes are tendencies that cannot be observed themselves but supposed to lead some observable behavioral tendencies [2]. Attitude is a psychological structure seen as an important predictor of an individual's behaviours with cognitive, audial and behavioral dimensions (Anderson, 1988). Attitude is learned tendency that force an individual exhibit particular behaviours towards particular people, objects and occasions [3]. Tezbaşaran (1997) defined attitude as the learnt tendency of positive or negative reaction towards a particular object, situation, establishment, concept or people [4]. Tavşancıl (2002) stated as the emotional and mental preparation mood with a directional or dynamic influential power formed as a result of living and experiences [5].

It seems difficult to form teaching experiences and provide desired behaviour changes in an atmosphere where students' attitudes are ignored. According to [6], the attitude of a student is important for the teacher in two aspects. One of them is to provide the students improve positive attitudes towards the lesson/subject. The second is to alter the negative attitudes to positive.

Geography is a science which examines the natural, related human and economical events on geographical earth by founding relations [7]. Geography is a branch of science which examines the shape of earth, the amyls affect that shapes and the relationship between human, consists the alive life on earth, bio and animal community and nature and their distribution [8]. As its seen, geography has the feature of being a science by examining the relationship of human and nature, examining what human do and will be able to do as a result of these relations [9].

Geography is among the most significant lessons that students need to learn. But a number of students are unwillingful to the geography lesson or they have the worry of success. Geography is generally seen as a difficult lesson to learn at school [10]. Many people consider geography as a compilation of statistical data and pure knowledge. Geography can be seen as the highest mountain of Turkey, the longest river, the biggest city or the smallest region. Because of this a majority of students are irrelevant to geography lessons, they avoid from geography and be unsuccessful in the lesson [11]. One of the factors affecting students' success in a lesson is they have their good study attitudes and habits or not [1, 12].

Geography is a characteristic of a science that examining the relationships between people and earth and what people are doing as a result of these relationships

and what they can do. This aspect of geography actually helps to generate solutions related to political and social problems that occur all over the world by getting them comprehend the dimensions of relationship between people and the residence place. In addition, with geography lesson its intended to be productive people who contribute the development of the country and develop their cognitive characteristics [13].

Geography has a multi - disciplined feature because of being in relation with both natural and human sciences. Because of this reason geography can provide qualifications that enable students to solve problems, think in multi dimensionally, have an independent and pure point of view and turn their acquisitions into habits in their daily lives. This is possible only with accurate planning of learning conditions and strategies and applying them in accordance with educational process. In the teaching process, students' preparedness level to the lesson and learning styles, teachers' methods or approach preference, teaching materials or teaching endeavour also physical conditions of the classroom are significant variants. In students' turning the lesson acquisitions into behaviour the mentioned variants should be revised carefully by the teacher. Nowadays a teacher with the role of a leader, specialist, guide, a model for students and classroom director undertake severe responsibilities in the classroom atmosphere. Newly designed 2005 geography teaching curriculum takes the themes with the use of methods and techniques of the constructivist paradigm as activity based learning. Constructivist geography teacher should prefer suitable methods and approaches and teaching materials according to the programme and prepare the activity based learning atmosphere [14]. Objectivist view has turned to constructivist approach with the recent learning approaches. To provide necessary qualifications for students and to maintain positive attitude towards the geography lessons can be possible only by realistic and accurate geography teaching.

It is obviously seen in the attitude studies that taking the students in the center of the lesson, providing active involvement, giving students' thoughts importance and providing a teaching and learning atmosphere where knowledge becomes meaningful by unifying it with life support students in developing positive attitude towards the lessons [15, 16, 17]. In order to get desired success in geography courses, students' developing positive attitude activities towards the lesson should not be ignored. Following are some of the studies examining secondary school students' attitudes towards geography

lesson in various dimensions. The researches assessing attitudes towards geography lessons at secondary school level increased recently. This situation is significant in terms of showing what affects the students' interests and expectations towards geography lessons. Such researches will give an idea about the arrangement of the geography curriculum.

Evaluating the students' attitudes towards secondary education geography lessons is the main purpose of this research. Knowing students' attitudes towards geography lesson can be an important means of increasing the efficacy of geography teaching. In a case where students show a very low interest to geography it is known that the themes are accepted as difficult, boring, a pile of ambiguous and abstract pieces of information. Former researches show that students with positive attitudes towards geography lessons increase their success [18-29]. Because of this reason in this research secondary school students' attitudes towards geography lesson were assessed and some suggestions were tried to improve about forming positive attitudes.

Following are the sub problems of the research:

- What are high school students' attitudes towards geography lesson?
- Do high school students' attitudes towards geography lesson have a meaningful variation according to gender?
- Do high school students' attitudes towards geography lesson have a meaningful variation according to class level?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was carried out based on survey model. Survey models are the research approaches aiming at describing a present or past situation as it is.

Study Group: The research group of the study is comprised of 200 students attending to high school students in Karabük in 2011 - 2012 educational years. Distribution of research students according to gender and grades are given in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, the participants of the research are 200 students. 99 of these students are boys and 101 of them are girls. Among the research participants; 59 students are 9th grade students, 49 students are 10th grade, 53 students are grade 11 and 39 students are 12th grade students.

Table 1: Distribution of research students according to gender and grades

		f (n=200)	% (100.0)
Gender	Boys	99	49.5
	Girls	101	50.5
Grade Levels	Grade 9	59	29.5
	Grade 10	49	24.5
	Grade 11	53	26.5
	Grade 12	39	19.5

Data Gathering Tool: In order to determine students' attitudes towards geography lesson "*Geography Lesson Attitude Scale*" whose validity and reliability was tested after factor analysis by Aydın (2009) was used taking the specialists' views into consideration [18]. The Cronbach Alpha reliability value was found as .94 of the attitude scale performed over 454 students by Aydın (2009) after broadening and confirmative factor analysis. After examining the survey statements, 1, 5, 6, 10, 12, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31 and 34 were determined as positive attitude whereas 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 25, 30, 32 and 33 were negative attitude statements. The received answers for each statement in the attitude scale were scored as "*I totally agree=5*", "*I agree=4*", "*Double minded=3*", "*I do not agree=2*", "*I do not agree at all=1*".

Data Analysis: The received data were analyzed in SPSS 15.0 programme. In the analysis of data concerning students' attitudes towards geography lesson frequency (f) and percentage (%) values were used. Independent t-test was used in the relation between students' geography attitude points and genders whereas in the relation between attitude points and class levels oneway variance analysis (ANOVA) was used. The findings gathered were arranged as tables and interpreted.

Findings: Findings and interpretations gathered from the research were handled according to the sub-problems of the research.

What Are the High School Students' Attitudes Towards Geography Lesson?: In order to determine high school students' attitudes towards geography lesson *geography attitude scale* was applied. Distribution of students' answers according to the answer choices in the attitude scale, their frequency, percentages and arithmetic mean were given in Table 2.

When Table 2 was examined, secondary school students' attitudes towards geography lesson, the following were concluded:

When general expressions measuring general attitudes towards geography lesson, it is clear that 83.5 % of the students love geography. When some of the percentages of the students' positive answers in the attitude survey were considered 83.5 % of the students love geography, 70% think it as a necessary and important lesson for everybody, 60.5 % geography lesson is useful in our daily life, 70 % have the opportunity to make inferences about natural events. The replies given to negative attitude statements and positive attitude statements were similar. For example 3.5 % agree with the statement "*There is nothing that geography contributes to my life*" where as 82 % do not agree. 5.5 % of the students agree with "*I do not like geography lesson at all*" statement while 90 % of them do not. 3 % of the students agree with the idea "*The least pleasant lesson is geography*" while 90 % do agree.

The most agreed *positive attitude statement* among the statements is "*Geography lesson helps us knowing our country and our world better*". 92.5 of the students agree with this idea whereas only 3% of them do not agree. The most agreed negative attitude statement by the students is "*I study geography because of my teacher's pressure*". 91.5 % of the students do not agree with this idea.

Do the Students' Attitudes Towards Geography Have a Meaningful Variation According to Gender?: Whether there is a meaninful difference between high school students' attitude points and genders was determined by independent t-test. T-test results of attitude scale points towards geography lesson according to gender were shown in Table 3.

When Table 3 was examined students' attitudes towards geography do not have a meaningful variation according to gender [$t(198)=,037 p>.05$]. This finding can be interpreted as there is not a meaningful relation between attitudes towards geography lesson and gender. In other words there is no difference in attitudes according to gender.

Do High School Students' Attitudes Towards Geography Lesson Have a Meaningful Difference According to Class Levels?: In the analysis of the third question of the research whether high school students' attitude points towards geography lesson vary or not according to class level variant was searched. Results of the analysis were given in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 2: Secondary school students' attitudes towards geography lesson

Statements in the Scale	I completely agree		I agree		I have no idea		I do not agree		I completely disagree		Arithmetic Mean
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	\bar{x}
1 Geography is a lesson that I love.	82	41.0	85	42.5	19	9.5	7	3.5	7	3.5	4.14
2 I do not like geography lesson at all.	7	3.5	4	2.0	9	4.5	65	32.5	115	57.5	4.38
3 Geography is the least loveliest among my lessons	4	2.0	2	1.0	12	6.0	51	25.5	131	65.5	4.51
4 I am not interested in geography lesson.	7	3.5	12	6.0	32	16.0	63	31.5	86	43.0	4.04
5 Geography is a lesson that I study with the biggest pleasure compared to other lessons.	13	6.5	52	26.0	55	27.5	43	21.5	37	18.5	2.80
6 Geography lesson is necessary and significant for every student.	46	23.0	95	47.5	42	21.0	7	3.5	10	5.0	3.80
7 I do not understand geography thus I do not want to learn Geography	10	5.0	8	4.0	13	6.5	59	29.5	110	55.0	4.25
8 I feel under pressure in geography lessons.	6	3.0	2	1.0	12	6.0	50	25.0	130	65.0	4.48
9 I am not successful in geography lessons even if I study too much.	5	2.5	6	3.0	11	5.5	51	25.5	127	63.5	4.44
10 It is not necessary to get afraid of geography.	100	50.0	67	33.5	15	7.5	10	5.0	8	4.0	4.20
11 I am not interested in geography themes.	10	5.0	9	4.5	28	14.0	76	38.0	77	38.5	4.00
12 The things I learn in geography are so useful in our daily lives.	41	20.5	81	40.5	60	30.0	12	6.0	6	3.0	3.69
13 It is unnecessary to know geography out of some basic knowledge.	7	3.5	21	10.5	29	14.5	64	32.0	79	39.5	3.93
14 There is no contribution of geography in my life.	4	2.0	7	3.5	25	12.5	64	32.0	100	50.0	4.24
15 I would be glad if the geography lesson hours decrease.	14	7.0	7	3.5	39	19.5	71	35.5	69	34.5	3.87
16 I am afraid of geography exams.	6	3.0	14	7.0	20	10.0	74	37.0	86	43.0	4.10
17 I join geography classes because it is compulsory.	7	3.5	24	12.0	19	9.5	57	28.5	93	46.5	4.03
18 I study geography because of my teacher's pressure.	5	2.5	4	2.0	8	4.0	61	30.5	122	61.0	4.45
19 Geography helps us in understanding our country and our world better.	106	53.0	79	39.5	9	4.5	4	2.0	2	1.0	4.41
20 Geography themes awakes my wonder.	43	21.5	82	41.0	41	20.5	19	9.5	15	7.5	3.59
21 Geography is a lesson that necessitates thinking.	25	12.5	94	47.0	54	27.0	16	8.0	11	5.5	3.53
22 I would like to have geography lesson through my education.	32	16.0	58	29.0	52	26.0	38	19.0	20	10.0	3.22
23 In having a pleasant geography lesson teacher's attitude in the class, performance and the usage of audio-visual aids, in short, the efficacy is important.	126	63.0	53	26.5	17	8.5	2	1.0	2	1.0	4.49
24 I take great pleasure from discussing the things that I learnt with my classmates.	31	15.5	52	26.0	57	28.5	40	20.0	20	10.0	3.17
25 I consider the time that I spend for geography as "a waste of time."	7	3.5	7	3.5	13	6.5	56	28.0	117	58.5	4.34
26 I am happy to have the skills of interpreting on natural events in geography lessons.	68	34.0	75	37.5	32	16.0	17	8.5	8	4.0	3.89
27 I follow the publications about problems such as "global warming" thanks to geography.	61	30.5	65	32.5	46	23.0	18	9.0	10	5.0	3.74
28 Doing geography assignments make me happy.	29	14.5	53	26.5	63	31.5	30	15.0	25	12.5	3.15
29 I look forward to geography hours.	24	12.0	40	20.0	63	31.5	39	19.5	34	17.0	2.90
30 I am worried when I hear the name of geography lesson.	6	3.0	11	5.5	21	10.5	52	26.0	110	55.0	1.75
31 I would like to have a more enjoyable geography lesson.	75	37.5	65	32.5	34	17.0	14	7.0	12	6.0	3.88
32 I feel more pleasant if there is no geography lesson.	13	6.5	13	6.5	40	20.0	52	26.0	82	41.0	3.88
33 I do not like the way our geography teacher teaches the lesson.	2	1.0	9	4.5	16	8.0	42	21.0	131	65.5	4.45
34 I'm planning to choose a vocation related to geography.	2	1.0	8	4.0	51	25.5	42	21.0	97	48.5	1.88

Table 3: T-test results of attitude scale points towards geography lesson according to gender

Gender	N	\bar{x}	S	Sd	t	P
Boys	99	129.67	21.257	198	.037	.971*
Girls	101	129.78	19.369			

P>0.05

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of High School Students' Attitudes Towards Geography Lesson according to class levels

Grade	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Grade 9	59	130.740	21.524
Grade 10	49	132.244	16.922
Grade 11	53	130.905	23.145
Grade 12	39	123.435	17.273
Total	200	129.730	20.274

Table 5: ANOVA Results of High School Students' Attitudes Towards Geography Lesson according to class levels

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P
Between Groups	1989.054	3	663.018	1.628	.184*
Within Groups	79814.37	196	407.216		
Total	81803.42	199			

*P>0.05

High School Students' attitudes towards geography lesson do not show a meaningful difference according to class levels [$F_{(3196)} = 1.628$; $p > 0.05$]. In other words there is no difference in attitudes according class level variant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Determining the level of students' attitudes towards geography lesson has been the first phase of the research. When general expressions measuring general attitudes towards geography lesson, it is clear that 80 % of the students love geography. In secondary education level in [9, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22] studies, in undergraduation level, [10, 30] studies students have positive attitudes towards geography.

Approximately, 80 % of the students love geography lesson. In order to make the students' attitudes better towards geography, some necessary arrangements in the teaching curriculum in general and necessary arrangement in the school programmes in particular should be applied

carefully. Among these arrangements by emphasizing geography and its place and importance among other courses, positive attitude and interest towards geography can be formed.

Students have positive attitude and thought related to the benefits of geography lesson. By geography lessons;

- Students have increasing level of interest on natural hazards and other environmental problems,
- Students pay attention to the publications related to the problems such as “global warming”,
- Students improve skills for interpreting about natural events,
- Students think that it helps them to understand Turkey and our world as well.

70 % of the students emphasize that I’m planning to choose a vocation related to geography. Similar conclusions can be seen in [19, 20] studies. Özgen, Bindak and Birel (2007) stated the following: The most important issue in perceiving geography science accurately and using it in solving the problems rising from every aspect of society is definitely education. In today’s world where environmental and political problems take place day by day, developments in geography and the importance given to geography should also be reflected to geography education as well. The approaches, methods, educational materials in geography should also be used in geography education too. A geography lesson in this frame may provide students all the necessary knowledge and skills related to geography after their secondary education. By this way students will learn how to reach the necessary knowledge and skills and how to use these skills in the solutions of problems instead of loading knowledge to students [31].

89.5 % of the students emphasize that in order to have a good geography lesson, geography teachers’ behaviours in the class and their performance are important. 70 % of the students agree with the idea “I would prefer a more enjoyable geography lesson”. In this case it can be said that geography teachers still use teacher centered approaches and insufficient audio-visual materials during the lesson. Similar conclusions can be seen in [10, 16, 19, 20]’s studies.

Students’ attitudes towards geography do not have a meaningful variation according to gender. In other words there is no difference in attitudes according to gender. This finding is similar to [10, 15, 31, 32] studies.

The most important factors affecting students’ attitudes in a negative way towards geography lessons teachers’ attitudes and performances during the lesson and as geography not being an entertaining lesson were determined. One of the major problems in geography education in schools is having a teacher centered education, method technique and strategies without any doubt. In recent years, “*Constructivist learning*” theory which has an important place in the field of geography education aims to educate students who have an active role in the information, engaged in research for deep knowledge and use the information they have learned rather than the students in the role of passive recipient of information. There are approaches such as cooperative learning, problem based learning and Project based learning which can establish a relationship between their knowledge and new information, observe their own learning and internalize the information by using what they learn in new areas and in this regard gives integrity to constructivist learning theory. One of the problems faced in Turkey in geography education, without doubt, is continue the use of teacher-centered method, technique and strategy. The master’s and doctora-level researches have shown that using student-centered technique in geography lessons have positive effects on the attitudes and success of the students. Coşkun (2004) has reached that project based learning [21], Aydın (2009) cooperative learning [9], Aksoy (2004) problem based learning [33], Demirkaya (2003) 4MAT method [22], Alaz (2007) and Uzunöz (2008) multiple intelligence practises [23, 24], Öztürk (2008) 5E model [25], Akşit (2007), Önal (2008), Bilgi (2008) active learning practises [29, 34, 35], Karakuş (2006) experiment method [36] has positive effect on the attitudes of the students towards geography lesson.

In this case geography teachers were suggested to prepare suitable learning conditions in accordance with the recent Geography Teaching Programme for their students.

It is determined that secondary school students’ attitude scale points towards geography lesson do not vary according to gender. In other words gender is not seen as a determining factor over secondary school students’ attitudes towards geography.

As a result of the variance analysis done for the differentiation of students’ attitudes towards geography lesson according to class levels, it is understood that the research students’ attitudes towards geography was no meaningful difference according to class levels.

Geography teachers' attitudes towards geography should be researched and hence their attitudes should be compared to the students' attitudes. Moreover studying other field teachers' attitudes towards geography may be useful in terms of geography education. Establishing geography research rooms, organizing excursions to suitable places may be useful in developing interest and attitude towards geography.

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