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## Conscious Consumerism Education in Social Studies Courses: Reflections of an Action Research\*

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### Abstract

This paper aims to reveal the effectiveness of conscious consumerism education about increasing and changing students' awareness and perceptions of conscious consumerism. In the study, the action research method, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. The study included 23 students studying in a public secondary school in Konya, Turkey. Data were collected by using structured interviews, teacher observations, teaching activities and video recordings. The data were evaluated by the content analysis method. Firstly, a "prior knowledge assessment form" was applied to the students to measure their knowledge about conscious consumerism. Then, considering the students' missing or incorrect knowledge, teaching activities about conscious consumerism were designed and implemented. The results obtained in the study have revealed that action research activities positively affect students' awareness and perception of conscious consumerism. In addition, these activities have enabled students to perceive "conscious consumption" as responsible, sustainable and thoughtful consumption.

**Key words:** Social Studies Courses, Economics Education, Conscious Consumerism, Consumer Rights

### Introduction

Consumption is one of the indispensable activities of human life. Especially with the increase in the number of shopping methods, consumption has increased rapidly in many areas such as food and drinks, education, transportation, entertainment, clothing and technology. However, the increase in consumption has also posed various risks and threats to consumers. Hence, learning basic knowledge related to consumption and consumer rights has become an important need for consumers (Mazlan, Redzuan & Bakar, 2014).

Although many legal regulations on consumer rights have been made worldwide, various problems are still encountered concerning purchased goods or services. In fact, the lack of adequate knowledge and education underlies these problems (Ersoy & Sariabduhahoglu, 2010; Bugday & Babaogul, 2016). In this context, children with basic consumer rights need to be educated on conscious consumption to make informed and conscious purchasing decisions (Consumer Affairs Victoria, 2003; Sánchez, Campa & Hernández, 2008). This education also aims to ensure that children engage in responsible consumption and use their economic resources responsibly, to improve their consumption-related knowledge and skills, to raise their awareness of sustainable consumption and to teach them how to claim their rights as consumers (Makela & Peters, 2004; McGregor, 2005; Kayali, 2008; Kaynak & Akan, 2011).

School education plays a vital role in providing children with skills and habits for conscious consumption. Schools, where children spend the most time apart from their families, not only offer important opportunities for children to learn about consumer rights but also help them develop critical skills (OECD, 2009). Moreover, the introduction of basic economic concepts in schools lays the groundwork for knowledge and skills related to consumption and consumerism (Atesoglu & Turkkahraman, 2009). To take advantage of these opportunities in schools, teachers need to have sufficient knowledge and teaching resources on consumer and consumption-related topics. In this way, teachers can create learning environments that will attract students' interest. Besides, effective integration of consumer education with other areas is crucial (OECD, 2009).

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Consumer education in schools can fail to provide desired outcomes due to various reasons including a lack of teaching materials, that existing teaching materials do not attract students' attention, that they are not consistent with the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum, that they are not well-structured, and that they do not address different learning styles. To overcome these problems and provide effective consumer education, it is necessary to produce interactive teaching materials. Besides, continuous involvement of stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students and NGOs should be encouraged (Consumer Affairs Victoria, 2003).

Consumer education, which is one of the crucial topics in education, has been addressed in various studies. In related studies, consumer education was found to be effective in raising students' awareness of consumer rights and responsibilities (Makela & Peters, 2004; McGregor, 2010; Danilane & Marzano, 2014) and preventing conspicuous consumption (Unay, 2012). In addition, it has been reported that children whose awareness is raised during consumer education at school are effective in their parents' purchasing decisions (Ekström, 2007). Despite the fact that consumer education has been proved to produce positive outcomes, schools other than vocational and technical schools (Board of Education and Training [BET], 2018) in Turkey do not offer compulsory or elective courses for consumer education (Sert, 2002). On the other hand, within the framework of legal responsibility for raising conscious consumers, some courses include topics related to conscious consumerism education.

### **Conscious Consumerism Education in Social Studies Courses**

In Turkey, the social studies course is one of the courses in secondary schools that contain content about conscious consumerism education. The curriculum of the social studies course (Ozturk, 2015), which has been taught at various educational levels in Turkey since 1968, aims to ensure that students are raised as citizens who know and exercise their citizenship rights and fulfill their responsibilities. It also aims to raise environmentally-aware individuals who know that most natural resources are limited and try to protect them (Ministry of National Education [MONE], 2018). These objectives and topics related to conscious consumerism are reflected in the curriculum and, therefore, in textbooks. For example, the "Production, Distribution, and Consumption" learning area of 5th-grade social studies textbooks contains topics of "Economic Activities in Our Environment; Professions, Economic and Social Life; Network of Production, Consumption, and Distribution; Let's Produce New Ideas" and a specific heading of "Conscious Consumer" (Sahin, 2018). In addition, the curriculum aims to develop skills such as cooperation, innovation, entrepreneurship, and research, as well as values such as responsibility, saving, solidarity and helpfulness within the scope of conscious consumerism education (MONE, 2018; Dere & Aktasli, 2019).

Various studies have been conducted on conscious consumerism education, which is one of the essential topics of the social studies course. These studies mostly examined topics such as consumer behaviors (Altiok, 2010; Uysal, 2017; Araboga, 2018), consumer awareness levels (Ersoy & Nazik, 2006; Akyuz, 2009; Saglam, 2010; Malbelegi & Saglam, 2013; Uyanik, 2015; Alimcan, 2018; Toy, 2019) and conscious consumerism education (Makela & Peters, 2004; McGregor, 2005, 2010, 2011; Pinarci, 2007; Malbelegi, 2011; Süle, 2012; Unay, 2012; Ozkaya, 2013; Danilane & Marzano, 2014; Ersoy & Papatga, 2015; Cavalcante, Silva, & Tavares, 2017).

Although various studies have been carried out on conscious consumerism education, no action research has so far been conducted to examine the topic in-depth and to propose interventions to the problems encountered in the process. Also, when the related studies were examined, the need for up-to-date teaching activities to be used in social studies courses emerged. After evaluating the current situation in the literature, it was decided to conduct action research with a class of 5th graders in a secondary school (we chose the 5th grade as it contains the highest number of topics related to conscious consumerism education). In short, the present study aims to reveal the effectiveness of conscious consumerism education about increasing and changing students' awareness and perceptions of conscious consumerism. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

- 1- How do the students perceive the concept of "conscious consumer?"
- 2- Do the students see themselves as conscious consumers?
- 3- Do the students see their parents as conscious consumers?
- 4- How did the conscious consumerism education contribute to the students?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

The action research method is one of the most powerful research models used, especially in the field of education (Glesne, 2012; Berg & Lune, 2015), and it helps to change and improve school and classroom

environments (Ekiz, 2003). In action research, classroom practices or activities are designed and implemented through participation and cooperation to eliminate various problems encountered in the teaching process. These practices constitute a cyclical or spiral process consisting of planning, action-taking, development and projection (Gurgur, 2019). Considering these properties of the action research model, we preferred to use it in this study to improve the quality of conscious consumerism education by finding solutions to the problems encountered.

### Action Research Process

First, the topic of the research was determined. Then, action and study groups were formed. The action group, which consists of one academician and one social studies teacher (researcher), exchanged views on how to improve students' success in conscious consumerism education and planned a 3-week action process (April 4-April 25, 2019). Then, various teaching activities based on active learning and teaching methods were implemented. Throughout the process, the lessons were video recorded. The action research process is detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Action research process

	Preparation	Implementation	Post-Implementation
<b>Dates</b>	March 20-April 3, 2019	April 4-29, 2019	April 30, 2019
	Literature review	Application of prior knowledge assessment form	Computerization of the data
	Creating an action group	Evaluating the results of prior knowledge assessment form and identifying problems	Presentation and interpretation of the findings
	Creating a working group	Preparation of the action plan and planning of the activities	Writing conclusion, discussion, and suggestions
<b>Actions</b>	Writing research questions	Conducting the activities and evaluating the results	Reporting
	Obtaining permissions	Carrying out additional activities for students' missing knowledge	
	Preparation of prior knowledge assessment form	Application of final knowledge assessment form	
	Editing the contents	Comparison of the results of prior and final knowledge assessment forms	
	Supplying a video recorder and getting it ready for recording	Obtaining students' views about the applications	
Data Analysis (Throughout the Process)			

### Working Group

The study group consists of 23 5th-graders (thirteen girls and ten boys) studying in a public secondary school in Konya, Turkey. The study group consisted of 5th-graders because the 5th-grade social studies curriculum contains a separate heading of "Conscious Consumer." To comply with ethical considerations, permission was obtained from the parents of the students, and codes (S1, S2, S3 ...) were used instead of their real names.

### Data Collection Tools

The co-researcher, who is also a social studies teacher, collected all data in his own classes. To obtain more comprehensive, diverse and reliable data, the triangulation method was used. The triangulation method is described as the application and combination of several research methods. Hence, the data were diversified by means of documents, interviews and observation notes. The data collection tools used in the research are shown in Figure 1:

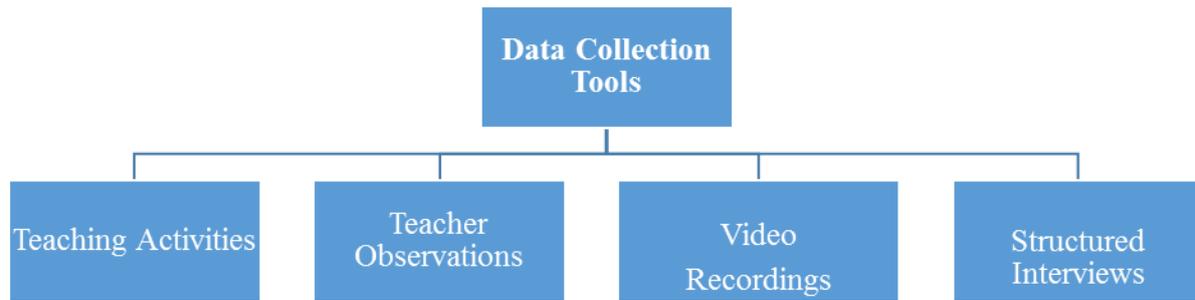


Figure 1. Data collection tools

### Teaching Activities

In order to teach the students conscious consumerism more effectively, 23 teaching activities were implemented. The constructivist-learning model and the 2018 Curriculum of the Social Studies Course were taken into consideration while preparing the classroom activities. In addition, the characteristics of the school and classroom and students' needs were taken into consideration. The teaching activities aimed to eliminate the problems indicated by the Prior Knowledge Assessment Form. The teaching activities are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. The teaching activities conducted in the action research process

Teaching Activities	Implementation location	Implementation type
A Need or A Want?	Class	Group
Requirement List Preparation	Class	Group
Making a Family Budget	Home	Individual
Market Research	Market	Individual
Questions to Identify Students' Conscious Consumption Habits	Home	Individual
Interviews with Parents (to identify their consumption habits)	Home	Individual
Characteristics of Conscious Consumers	Class	Group
Logo and Emblem Work	Class	Group
Conscious Consumerism Visual Interpretation	Class	Group
Interpreting Caricatures related to Conscious Consumerism	Class	Group
Conscious Consumerism Puzzle (Finding Concepts)	Class	Group
Concept Cards	Class	Group
Conscious Consumerism Concepts (Anagram Puzzle)	Class	Group
Characteristics of Conscious Consumers (Structured Grid)	Class	Group
Interpreting the Caricature Depicting Defective Goods	Class	Group
Making a Telephone Conversation with 174 Food Hotline	Class	Group
Drama Work	Class	Group
Conscious Consumerism Mind Map	Home	Individual
Preparation of Brochures and Slogans	Home	Individual
Board Work	Class	Individual
Conscious Consumers' Cycle of Claiming Rights	Class	Group
Completion of an Incomplete Scenario	Class	Group
Writing a Petition to the Consumer Arbitration Committee	Class	Group

The data obtained from the teaching activities presented in Table 2 were used to find answers to the research questions.

### Teacher Observations

One of the three key data collection methods of qualitative research is observations. Depending on the purpose and questions of the research, the physical environment, participants, conversations and the observer's own behavior can be monitored during the observation process. In addition, observations provide in-depth descriptions of the event, phenomenon, and situation that is being studied. Unstructured observations, which are

one of the types of observations, are performed in the natural environment with the participation of the researcher (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). The teacher, who is also the researcher of this research, observed the classroom activities, students and the whole process. All observations provided an important source of data used to describe the research process.

#### *Video Recordings*

All the classroom activities related to conscious consumerism education were recorded with a video recorder. First of all, test recordings were made in the classroom. Then, the video recorder was positioned at a location in the classroom that best viewed the classroom. The data obtained with the video recorder were computerized at the end of each day. These video recordings enabled the researcher to monitor the classroom activities and use them for the subsequent application and data analysis process. In addition, these recordings provided an opportunity for a realistic analysis of the classroom interaction, classroom environment and performances of the researcher and the students.

#### *Structured Interviews*

Interviews allow researchers to learn about the behaviors and feelings of participants of a study and to reveal what they know about and how they feel about a certain topic, phenomenon, etc. (Merriam, 2018). So, the purpose of interviews is to reveal what is going on in other people's minds and to learn about their perspectives (Patton, 2018). The structured interview, which is one of the interview types, involves asking a series of predefined questions to reveal participants' thoughts and attitudes on the topic of interest (Berg & Lune, 2015). Although we planned to use semi-structured interviews when designing the research, we had to use structured interview forms due to some obstacles (some of the students had to catch the school bus after the school, they had to attend the school ceremonies, and some of them were absent from school on some days). The interview form consists of four basic questions prepared to evaluate conscious consumerism education.

#### *Data Analysis*

In line with the action research model, data analysis was conducted throughout this study. Also, content analysis was used to analyze the collected data and to evaluate the whole process in detail (Berg & Lune, 2015). Furthermore, in order not to miss important details, meanings, and links (Lavrakas & Roller, 2015; Leavy, 2017), the data were coded manually instead of using a program. The data obtained were first read meticulously. Subsequently, similar data were grouped under specific concepts and themes. These data were then arranged and interpreted in a way that the reader can understand. However, since different categories emerged outside the predetermined framework of analysis, new themes were also created. Although the data was collected from many data collection tools in the research, only the sections that reveal students' perceptions and thoughts were added to the data analysis.

#### *Reliability and Validity Studies*

The triangulation method (Berg & Lune, 2015; Silverman, 2018) was used to ensure the validity and reliability of this study. To this end, we used three forms of data: documents, interviews and observations. Moreover, direct quotes were included to describe the students' answers in detail (Baskale, 2016) and to present them as evidence to the readers. In addition, a video recorder was used to record and observe the action research process. Throughout the research process, the opinions of two academicians with expertise in their fields were taken.

## **Findings**

At the end of the data analysis, the findings for the research questions were presented, respectively.

### **Students' Perceptions of Conscious Consumerism**

This section includes the findings obtained from structured interviews with the students. To determine the students' perceptions of the conscious consumer concept, the students were asked: "What comes to your mind when you hear 'conscious consumer'?" Students' perceptions of conscious consumers are presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Students' perceptions of conscious consumer concept

Students' Perceptions	<i>f</i>
Being aware of and exercising consumer rights	17
Paying attention to the packaging of products	16
Prioritizing their needs	10
Shopping on a budget	9
Saving money	9
Avoiding wasting money	5
Healthy Eating	4
Getting receipts, invoices, or warranty certificates	4
Preferring domestic products	2
Pricing research	2
Social studies	1
Economy	1
Quality products	1

As can be seen in Table 3, to the question "What comes to your mind when you hear 'conscious consumer'?" the most frequently stated answer (17) was "Being aware of and exercising consumer rights." For example, S6 described "conscious consumers" as follows: "*Responsible, aware of their rights, know when to call 174 and 175 consumer helplines.*" This student sees conscious consumers as individuals who are aware of their consumer rights and who exercise them when necessary.

It is noteworthy that the students describe conscious consumers as responsible individuals. Relating responsibility to being a conscious consumer, S14 said: "*(conscious consumers) get receipts, invoices, or warranty certificates when they buy a product.*" Relating the skill of researching to being a conscious consumer, S23 described conscious consumers as follows: "*(conscious consumers) do pricing research.*" These findings prove that conscious consumerism education helped achieve the objectives of the social studies course curriculum.

The views of the students were not limited to the skills and values included in the curriculum. The students also emphasized saving money as well as self-control, decision-making, and financial literacy, which are not among the skills in the relevant learning area at the 5th-grade level. For example, S7 defines conscious consumers as "*...those who buy something when they need it.*" The student's answer shows that he/she makes a connection between self-control skills and the concept of conscious consumerism.

On the other hand, to the question "What comes to your mind when you hear 'conscious consumer'?" the second most frequently stated answer (16) was "Paying attention to the packaging of products." The students think that conscious consumers take care that the packaging of products is not open and examines carefully the packaging of the product they buy. Here are some sample excerpts from the students' responses:

S9: "*They (conscious consumers) examine the packaging of products and prefer packed products.*"

S13: "*They pay attention to the expiration date, production date, and TSI (Turkish Standards Institute) stamp.*"

S22: "*They examine the ingredients of food products and consume reliable food.*"

In addition to these, the students described conscious consumers as "Being aware of and exercising consumer rights," "Paying attention to the packaging of products," "Prioritizing their needs," "Shopping on a budget," "Saving money," "Avoiding wasting money" and "Healthy Eating." This shows that the students explain the concept of conscious consumerism by emphasizing both healthy and sustainable consumption and consumer rights.

### Students' Perceptions of Themselves as Conscious Consumers

The second research question aimed to determine whether students perceive themselves as conscious consumers. According to the findings, a great majority of the students (18) see themselves as conscious consumers. In contrast, three students do not see themselves as conscious consumers, while two students think that they are partly conscious consumers. The students were asked why they thought so. The reasons expressed by the students who see themselves as conscious consumers are as follows:

Table 4. Reasons stated by the students who see themselves as conscious consumers

Reasons	<i>f</i>
I pay attention to production and expiration dates.	11
I examine the packaging of the products that I buy.	10
I save money.	7
I know and exercise my consumer rights.	7
I prioritize my needs.	5
After buying something, I get a receipt, invoice, or warranty certificate.	5
I make a list of needs.	4
I eat healthy food.	3
I shop on my budget.	2
I prefer domestic products.	2
I pay attention to the prices of the products.	2
I do not waste anything.	2
I do pricing research.	1
I pay attention to buying quality products.	1

To the question of why they perceive themselves as conscious consumers, the most frequently expressed answer was, "I pay attention to production and expiration dates." Besides, the students think that one needs to examine the packaging of the products to be a conscious consumer. Some sample excerpts are as follows:

S12: "...because I examine the production and expiration dates of food products and drinks."

S21: "...because I check whether the packaging of the products is open or closed."

The fact that students examine the packaging of the products is an indication that they try to buy healthy products because product-packaging descriptions concern consumers' health. In addition, one of the reasons the students expressed why they perceive themselves as conscious consumers is that they avoid wasting money. For example, S10, who considers saving money as one of the requirements of being a conscious consumer, said: "I don't spend much. So, most of my money stays in my pocket." In addition to saving money, the students regarded "knowing and exercising consumer rights," "getting a receipt, invoice, or warranty certificate," "making a list of needs," and "preferring domestic products" as the requirements of being a conscious consumer. In line with these findings, it is possible to associate students' reasons for considering themselves as conscious consumers with their desire for healthy consumption.

It has also been found that some students (3) do not see themselves as conscious consumers. Students who do not see themselves as conscious consumers said that they "do not sometimes eat healthy food or look at the expiration dates on the packaging of products." S16, who does not consider himself/herself to be a conscious consumer, emphasized the relationship between healthy eating and being a conscious consumer: "No (I am not a conscious consumer) because I buy very little healthy food." In addition, two students who consider themselves partly conscious consumers stated that although they shop on their budgets and prefer domestic products, they sometimes buy things that they do not need, or they sometimes do not check the expiration dates of the products they buy. Overall, the findings in this section indicate that all the students see conscious consumerism closely related to healthy consumption.

### Students' Perceptions of Their Parents as Conscious Consumers

After evaluating students' perception of themselves as conscious consumers, their perceptions of their parents as conscious consumers were examined. The findings show that all but one of the students perceive their parents as conscious consumers. The reasons expressed by the students about their perceptions of their parents as conscious consumers are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Reasons stated by the students who perceive their parents as conscious consumers

Reasons	<i>f</i>
They look at the expiration date of the products they buy.	8
They prioritize our needs.	6
They make a list of needs.	6
They shop on a budget.	5
They do pricing research.	4

They do not waste money.	4
They prefer domestic products.	3
They prefer healthy products.	3
They pay attention to the TSI stamp on the packaging of the products they buy.	3
They spend money carefully.	3
They follow the rules.	2
They make sure that the packaging of the product is not open.	2
They get a receipt, invoice, or guarantee certificate after buying a product.	2

According to Tables 4 and 5, the reasons why the students perceive themselves and their parents as conscious consumers are similar. One of the most frequently stated reasons is that they "pay attention to the expiration dates." According to S5, his/her parents are conscious consumers "...because they look at the expiration date of the products they buy." Looking at this excerpt, we can say that students think that examining the expiration dates of products is important to be a conscious consumer. One of the reasons expressed by the students as to why they see their parents as conscious consumers is that their parents prioritize their needs. Here are some sample excerpts from the interviews with the students who believe that their parents are conscious consumers:

S7: "...because they don't buy more than they need. They shop on their budget."

S8: "...because my mother cooks only enough food for us, and my father buys bread only as much as we need."

S21: "...they first buy what they need and then what they want."

As it is seen, the students see their parents as conscious consumers because their parents prioritize their needs. In addition, according to S2, making a list of needs is an indicator of being a conscious consumer: "Yes (they are conscious consumers) because every time they go shopping, they make a list of needs and prioritize our needs." Furthermore, some students see their parents as conscious consumers because they "shop on a budget, do pricing research, do not waste money, prefer domestic and healthy products, and pay attention to the TSI stamp on the packaging of the products they buy."

It can be said that the interviews that the students made with their parents were effective in assessing whether their parents are conscious consumers or not. When this activity was evaluated in the classroom, the teacher asked the students the following question: "How did the interview with your parents contribute to you? What did you learn from this interview?" The students expressed that thanks to these interviews, they could find about their parents' shopping behaviors and whether they were conscious consumers. Based on the findings in this section, we can conclude that the students see both their parents and themselves as conscious consumers. To support their views, the students included consumer rights in their explanations. On the other hand, only one student (S1) does not see his father as a conscious consumer: "My father is not a conscious consumer because he buys whatever I want. He doesn't save money." Although S1's father buys whatever he/she wants, S1 does not approve of his/her father's behavior and states that he should save money as a conscious consumer.

### Contributions of Conscious Consumerism Education to Students

In the last part of the findings, the contributions of conscious consumerism education to students were evaluated. The findings are presented in Table 6:

Table 6. Students' views on conscious consumerism education

Students' Views	<i>f</i>
It helped us learn about the characteristics of conscious consumers.	23
It helped us learn about and exercise our rights as consumers.	18
It helped us understand the importance of expiration dates.	7
It helped us understand the importance of making a list of needs.	4
It helped us recognize the importance of prioritizing needs.	3
It helped us learn the importance of the TSI stamp.	3
It helped us understand the importance of getting receipts, invoices, or warranty certificates.	2
It helped us recognize the importance of saving money.	1
It helped us recognize the importance of avoiding wasting money.	1
It helped us learn to make a budget.	1
It contributed a great deal to our success in the exams.	1

According to the results in Table 6, all of the students stated that they learned about conscious consumerism with the conscious consumerism education they received. In this regard, S1 stated, *"It enabled me to easily answer the question of what a conscious consumer does. I also learned about the characteristics of conscious consumers."*

The second important contribution of conscious consumerism education to students was that "it helped them to learn about consumer rights" (18). The students mostly emphasized their rights as consumers after purchasing a product. For example, S18 stated, *"I have learned better and in more detail the rights I have as a consumer, as well as the ways of claiming my rights."* In addition, S5 referred to the right to product returns and to file a complaint: *"I have learned that if the products we buy are defective, we can return them and if there is a problem, we can file a complaint to the consumer arbitration committee."* Also, the students stated that although they were aware of some of the consumer rights, they started to shop more carefully after the conscious consumerism education. For example, S10 said, *"I didn't use to look at the expiration dates of products, but now I do. I am more careful about it."* This shows that conscious consumerism education raised the students' awareness of shopping more consciously.

## Results and Discussion

This study examined the views of 5th-grade students about the concept of conscious consumerism and conscious consumerism education provided employing various classroom activities. Overall, the results of the research show that teaching activities increased the participating students' awareness of conscious consumerism. In parallel with this general result, it was determined that the students associated the concept of "conscious consumers" with healthy and responsible consumption. It was also found that the students thought that conscious consumers are those who know and exercise their consumer rights, pay attention to the packaging of the products they buy and get receipts, invoices, or warranty certificates for the products they buy.

These results are consistent with the findings of Uyanik (2015). The students who participated in Uyanik's study defined conscious consumers as those who spend money on what they need, who save money, who do not waste money, who do exercises, who eat healthy food, who know their consumer rights, and who protect the environment. Similarly, Purutcuoglu (2003) found that students perceive conscious consumers as someone who spends money in a planned manner and claims their consumer rights. These results, as in other studies in the literature (Makela & Peters, 2004; McGregor, 2005, 2010, 2011; Süle, 2012; Mazlan, Redzuan, & Bakar, 2014; Cavalcante, Silva & Tavares, 2017), reveal the importance of responsible, sustainable and thoughtful consumption for conscious consumers.

The definitions of the students who associated the concept of conscious consumers with healthy and responsible consumption are similar to those made by Gulmez (2006) and Bugday (2015). The researchers described the concept of conscious consumers as individuals who know and exercise their consumer rights, who prioritize their basic needs, who prefer healthy, high-quality and reliable products, who are not deceived by ads, who save money, and who avoid wasting money. The answers of the students in this study, therefore, are consistent with the above-mentioned definitions.

In addition to all these, students' perceptions of conscious consumers reveal that the present study was successful in achieving the learning outcome specified as *"Exercises his/her rights as a conscious consumer."* in the 2018 Curriculum of the Social Studies Course. It has particularly been determined that the classroom activities carried out in social studies classes yield positive outcomes about raising students' awareness of their rights as consumers. Finally, while explaining the concept of conscious consumers, the students mentioned financial literacy, researching and decision-making skills as well as values such as saving, responsibility, justice, and patriotism, which are specified as learning outcomes in the curriculum.

This is valuable in terms of proving that action research activities are compatible with the learning outcomes of the curriculum. On the other hand, the students participating in this study, like the students who participated in other studies in the literature (Saglam, 2010; Malbelegi & Saglam, 2013; Uyanik, 2015; Uysal, 2017), see themselves as conscious consumers. Also, the students perceive their parents as individuals who make conscious consumption for the same reasons. When asked why they see them as conscious consumers, they stated reasons such as, "they pay attention to the expiration dates of the products that they buy," and "they examine the packaging of the new products they buy." Therefore, it can be said that the students already exhibit such behaviors when shopping. In fact, according to Akhan and Kilicoglu (2014), students understand the concepts of money and needs better than other economic concepts because they use these concepts more frequently in their

daily lives. In addition, Akhan (2013) argues that various experiences of students in daily economic activities affect their related skills, values and behaviors.

Finally, it has been found out that conscious consumerism education given to students has contributed to them a great deal. The students' statements about consumer rights show that they mostly emphasize their rights as consumers after purchasing a product. In addition, the students mostly stated that the conscious consumerism education helped them "learn about the characteristics of conscious consumers," "learn about and exercise their rights as consumers," "understand the importance of making a list of needs" and "understand the importance of expiration date." The students even stated that they started to pay more attention to shopping more consciously after this education. The use of various teaching activities for conscious consumerism education has played an important role in ensuring these contributions. Similarly, Pinarci (2007) and Malbelegi (2011) emphasized that the topics taught by using different methods contributed positively to students' knowledge about consumerism. Besides, Makela and Peters (2004) underlined that consumer education provided to adolescents helps students learn their rights and responsibilities as consumers. Furthermore, McGregor (2010) noted that consumer education given to secondary school students improves their conscious consumption-related knowledge, skills and attitudes. Finally, Unay (2012) found that consumer education given by means of classroom activities in accordance with the Theory of Multiple Intelligences increased students' knowledge about conspicuous consumption. The results of the mentioned studies and the current research are valuable in terms of showing that the conscious consumerism education given to students using different methods and classroom activities can and will make positive contributions to students.

Like many studies, this study also has its own strengths and weaknesses. The strongest aspect of this research is that it is the first action research on conscious consumerism education. In addition, in order to fully reflect the research process and eliminate the weaknesses of the research, the triangulation method was adopted, and various data collection tools were used. Finally, 23 teaching activities designed within the scope of conscious consumerism education are also among the strengths of the research.

The weakest aspect of the study was that some of the data were obtained through structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, could have provided us with richer and deeper information by asking different questions to the students. Nevertheless, video recordings and teacher observations performed throughout the implementation process provided rich and detailed data. One final weakness of the study is that it was conducted in only one classroom of only one school.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of the research, it is necessary to make various recommendations for the stakeholders of social studies education. As is known, consumption has increased rapidly in recent years in many fields such as food, education, transportation, entertainment, clothing and technology, which has caused various problems for consumers. This makes it even more important to educate students as conscious consumers. Therefore, based on the results of this study, we can make the following recommendations for social studies teachers and researchers:

- Teaching activities should be designed in which students can experience purchasing firsthand.
- Parents should also be a part of the education process through interviews to identify their consumption habits.
- Researchers who are interested in conscious consumerism should aim to solve the existing problems faced by social studies teachers. Their research designs should be shaped after interviewing social studies teachers, and opinions of experts from different fields should be obtained to provide scientific infrastructure.
- Finally, future research should design teaching activities that address different intelligence areas and learning styles as much as possible and make these teaching activities available to social studies teachers.

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