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AN EXAMINATION OF FOURTH-GRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' SELF-REGULATED LEARNING, MOTIVATION FOR SOCIAL STUDIES, AND SOCIAL STUDIES ACHIEVEMENT IN TERMS OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ¹

Research article

Abdullah Baki GÜLLÜ ², Barış ÇETİN ³

^a Ministry of National Education, Türkiye

^b Çanakkale Onsekizmart University, Department of Elementary Education, Çanakkale, Türkiye

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Abstract

This study aims to explore self-regulated learning skills, motivation for social studies, and academic performance in social studies among fourth-grade elementary school students, specifically focusing on how these elements interact with students' socioeconomic status. The research employs a cross-sectional survey model. The sample comprises 195 fourth-grade students enrolled in five public elementary schools in the Kulu district of Konya province. The data were collected using the Self-Regulated Learning Inventory developed by Çokçalışkan et al. (2019), the Social Studies Motivation Scale by Tahiroğlu and Aktepe (2015), the Social Studies Achievement Scale by Münevver Menteşe (2021), and a demographic form. The research findings are as follows: parental education levels did not significantly affect students' self-regulated learning or their motivation towards social studies. While maternal education level did not impact students' academic achievement, a significant difference ($p < .05$) favouring students whose fathers held graduate degrees was observed in academic performance. Furthermore, monthly household income did not significantly influence students' self-regulated learning skills or their motivation in social studies. However, a significant difference ($p < .05$) in social studies achievement was found, favoring students from families with a monthly income of 15,001 to 17,500 TRY.

Keywords: Elementary Social Studies, self-regulated learning, motivation, socioeconomic variable, academic achievement.

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¹ It is derived from the master's thesis titled "An Examination of Fourth-Grade Elementary School Students' Self-Regulated Learning, Motivation Towards Social Studies, and Social Studies Achievement in Terms of Various Variables".

^a Corresponding author: Abdullah Baki GÜLLÜ. ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1616-4811>,

E-mail: abdullahbakig@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

1.1. Self-regulated learning

Self-regulation has been defined as the manner in which individuals control their own actions, emotions, and thoughts, thereby regulating their own behavior (Bandura, 1996). It is a multi-component and iterative process through which an individual manages their mental processes, emotions, behaviors, and environment to achieve personal goals (Cascallar et al., 2006). Self-regulation encompasses a set of intentionally structured and organized thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that individuals employ, using cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational strategies to reach predetermined goals (Schunk, 2001).

Self-regulated learning is a process that enables students to actively manage their own learning. Within this process, students set learning goals, monitor their progress, and adapt their strategies as necessary, utilizing cognitive and behavioral skills (Hofer et al., 1998; Pintrich, 2000). Through self-regulated learning, individuals gain awareness of the targeted behavior to be learned, develop and adjust learning strategies, and differentiate between effective and ineffective practices for future learning goals (Winne, 1995).

A student with self-regulated learning skills is intrinsically motivated to complete tasks successfully, setting realistic goals, employing effective strategies, and monitoring their own academic progress. Such individuals are capable of modifying and adapting their strategies when necessary (Zimmerman, 1989). The effectiveness and retention of learning are contingent on learner's self-regulation abilities. Students must be willing to make efforts toward their goals and persist despite challenges (Paris & Paris, 2001).

Children with advanced self-regulation skills exhibit higher levels of social competence compared to their peers. These skills contribute to numerous positive outcomes, such as reduced behavioral issues and more harmonious relationships with peers and teachers (Eisenberg et al., 2010). Self-regulation empowers children to act thoughtfully and responsibly rather than impulsively, allowing them to remain calm and develop appropriate solutions in conflict-laden situations (McClelland & Tominey, 2014).

Over the past decade, self-regulation and self-regulated learning skills have become focal points of research due to their pivotal roles in individuals' academic and social lives. The development of these skills is shown to enable individuals to fully realize their potential and achieve success across all areas of life (Drake et al., 2014; Riva & Ryan, 2015; Montroy et al., 2016).

1.2. Motivation

Motivation refers to any general drive or inclination to undertake an action (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). It also reflects the intensity and persistence of effort exerted to achieve goals (Robbins, 2003, p. 155). Motivation is a complex process that activates individuals and directs them toward a specific purpose (Biehler & Snowman, 1997). According to Wentzel and Wigfield (2007), motivation is defined as a series of processes that initiate and sustain diverse behaviors.

Motivation plays a critical role in determining an individual's level and type of motivation through cognitive appraisals, emotional responses, and environmental factors. It significantly

influences learning and performance. Motivation possesses the power to drive human actions and steer their behaviors (Fındıkçı, 2000, p. 373). It serves as a fundamental driving force, triggered by needs and expectations, which propels behaviors. To fulfill personal goals and satisfy desires, individuals select and direct various actions, where feedback from these actions subsequently influences motivation levels, thereby determining the continuity or alteration of behaviors (Biehler & Snowman, 1997).

1.3. Social Studies

According to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), social studies is an interdisciplinary field of education that integrates content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences, blending insights from various disciplines such as religion, sociology, psychology, political science, philosophy, history, law, geography, economics, archaeology, and anthropology (as cited in Herczog, 2010).

Sönmez (1997) defines social studies as the process of establishing evidence-based and logical connections regarding social phenomena. Similarly, Doğanay (2002) describes social studies as a multidisciplinary field, encompassing a broad range of disciplines and fostering interdisciplinary inquiry. Social studies aim to provide a holistic perspective on social realities (Safran, 2015). In elementary social studies education, students learn about social phenomena within their surroundings, acquire knowledge, and develop a positive attitude towards problem-solving (Savage & Armstrong, 1987; Brophy et al., 2016).

Barr et al. (1977) present social studies as a form of citizenship education that encourages active participation, enabling individuals to gain knowledge and experience regarding human relationships. Three distinct approaches to social studies instruction are noted: "teaching social studies as a social science", "teaching social studies as reflective inquiry", and "teaching social studies as citizenship transmission". The citizenship transmission approach specifically aims to impart certain knowledge, behaviors, and values to students (Barth & Demirtaş, 1997, pp. 1-9; as cited in Doğanay, 2002, p. 20; Öztürk, 2006).

According to İnan (2014), the primary objective of the social studies curriculum in Turkey is to cultivate effective and responsible citizens for the nation. Expectations of social studies vary across countries; however, a shared emphasis on competent citizenship unites them. For instance, while the United States aims to foster active and informed citizens, Japan focuses on the individual's role in an industrial society. Australia prioritizes ethics and social justice, China emphasizes national spirit, South Africa values human rights, ethics, and environmental awareness, Finland highlights responsible citizenship, Nigeria emphasizes life values, Denmark focuses on relationships between state and society, and Italy stresses active social membership (İnan, 2014, p.10).

Self-regulated learning skills play a critical role in helping individuals manage their learning processes, formulate strategies, and thereby enhance motivation and academic achievement. However, many teachers lack sufficient knowledge on how to develop students' self-regulation skills, which negatively impacts both student motivation and academic performance. Therefore, examining the effects of self-regulated learning processes on motivation for social studies and achievement in social studies is anticipated to contribute significantly to achieving the course's objectives.

The literature includes numerous studies examining the relationship between self-regulated learning, academic achievement, and academic motivation (Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Alexander & Judy, 1988; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). For example, Zimmerman (2002) has demonstrated the positive effects of self-regulated learning on academic performance, while Schunk (2001) and Pintrich (2000) have examined its impact on learning strategies and motivation. However, there is a scarcity of studies specifically investigating the effects of self-regulated learning within the context of social studies.

Considering the importance of promoting self-regulated learning in social studies and enhancing students' motivation in this process, it is evident that further information is needed in this field. Specifically, examining the relationship between fourth-grade students' self-regulated learning skills, motivation for social studies, academic performance, and socioeconomic status will aid teachers in more effectively planning learning processes. Accordingly, this research aims to serve as a guiding resource for elementary school teachers, academics, researchers, and social studies experts on the Turkish Board of Education.

A family's socioeconomic status is defined by the educational level of parents and the household's monthly income (Şirin, 2005; Luo & Gao, 2022). The research question is as follows: Do fourth-grade elementary school students' levels of self-regulated learning, motivation for social studies, and social studies achievement differ according to parental educational level and household monthly income?

2. Methods

In this study, a cross-sectional survey model, one of the survey designs (Creswell, 2012), was employed to determine whether fourth-grade elementary school students' self-regulated learning, motivation towards social studies, and academic achievement in social studies differ by socioeconomic status.

2.1. Participants

The population of this study consists of students enrolled in official elementary schools in Kulu district of Konya during the 2022-2023 academic year. The sample was selected using a random sampling technique (Cohen et al., 2000) and includes a total of 195 fourth-grade students aged 9 to 12, attending five public elementary schools affiliated with the Kulu District National Education Directorate in Konya. Among these students, 83 are male, and 112 are female. The distribution of students by socioeconomic level is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution Percentages of Students by Socioeconomic Level*

Variables	Level	f	%
Mother's Education Level	Literate	21	10,8
	Elementary	30	15,4
	Secondary	57	29,2
	High School	51	26,2
	University	31	15,9
	Graduate	4	2,6
	Total	195	100,0
Father's Education Level	Literate	12	6,2
	Elementary	23	11,8
	Secondary	41	21,0
	High School	47	24,1
	University	65	33,3
	Graduate	7	3,6
	Total	195	100,0
Monthly Family Income	8.500-10.000 TRY	68	34,9
	10.001-12.500 TRY	49	25,1
	12.501-15.000 TRY	36	18,5
	15.001-17.500 TRY	28	14,4
	Other	14	7,2
	Total	195	100,0

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Social Studies Motivation Scale: This scale, developed by Tahiroğlu and Aktepe (2015), aims to determine the motivation levels of fourth- and fifth-grade elementary school students regarding social studies. Construct validity was established through factor analysis, which revealed a five-factor, 29-item structure based on a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability

values for each sub-dimension are as follows: Motivation for Achievement: 0.71, Motivation for Goals: 0.66, Motivation for Interest, Desire, and Needs: 0.70, Lack of Motivation: 0.64, and Motivation for Appreciation: 0.57. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the overall scale was calculated as 0.83 (Tahiroğlu & Aktepe, 2015).

2.2.2. *Self-Regulated Learning Inventory*: Developed by Çokçalışkan et al. (2019), this inventory measures how fourth-grade elementary school students manage self-regulated learning. The inventory comprises three sub-dimensions: forethought (12 items), performance (11 items), and self-reflection (11 items). The internal consistency coefficients for these subscales are 0.86, 0.84, and 0.87, respectively (Çokçalışkan et al., 2019).

2.2.3. *Social Studies Achievement Scale*: Mentşe (2021) developed a 20-item test covering the "Culture and Heritage" topic as part of a master's thesis titled "Sosyal bilgiler dersinin halk bilimi ürünleriyle işlenmesinin öğrencilerin akademik başarı ve tutumlarına etkisi" [The effect of teaching the social studies course with folklore products on the achievement and attitudes of the students]. The test's optimal difficulty level was calibrated to reflect a 50% success rate for an average student, with an average difficulty level of 0.59 (Mentşe, 2021).

2.2.4. *Demographic Form*: Developed by the researchers, this form collects data on students' age, gender, parental education levels, and family monthly income.

2.3. Procedure and data analysis

Approval for this research was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of the Graduate Education Institute at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Subsequently, official permission was granted by the Konya Governorship and the Provincial Directorate of National Education to administer the study scales.

Data collection was conducted during the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year with 195 fourth-grade students from five public elementary schools in Kulu district, Konya, under the jurisdiction of the local Directorate of National Education. Written consent was obtained from the parents of the participating students via the Parental Consent Form. The data were collected by the researcher using the "Social Studies Motivation Scale", the "Self-Regulated Learning Inventory", the "Social Studies Achievement Scale", and the "Demographic Form".

For statistical analysis of the total scores obtained from the "Social Studies Motivation Scale", the "Self-Regulated Learning Inventory", and the "Social Studies Achievement Scale", SPSS 26.00 statistical software was utilized, with the sum of arithmetic means serving as the basis.

To determine whether the data followed a normal distribution, skewness and kurtosis values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 79) and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017) were employed. For data to exhibit normal distribution, skewness and kurtosis values should fall between -1.5 and 1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 79). It was observed that the skewness and kurtosis values for the "Self-Regulated Learning Inventory" (-1.24 to 1.68),

the “Social Studies Motivation Scale” (-1.42 to 2.56), and the “Social Studies Achievement Scale” (-1.41 to -1.69) did not meet the required range. Since the data did not exhibit a normal distribution, non-parametric statistical techniques were applied.

The Kruskal-Wallis test, a non-parametric equivalent of one-way ANOVA used to measure differences across three or more samples when data are not normally distributed (Miller, 2009, p. 123), was employed to examine the effects of parental education levels and socioeconomic status.

3.Results

This section presents the findings on whether fourth-grade elementary school students' self-regulated learning, motivation towards social studies, and academic achievement in social studies differ according to socioeconomic status.

3.1-Results on Self-Regulated Learning, Motivation for Social Studies, and Academic Achievement in Social Studies Concerning Mother's Education Level

Table 2. *Kruskal-Wallis-H Test Results for Students' Total Scores in Self-Regulated Learning, Motivation for Social Studies, and Social Studies Achievement by Mother's Education Level*

Sub-Factors	Mother's Education Level	N	\bar{x} number	X^2	sd	P
Self-regulated learning	Illiterate	21	93,07	4,07	5	0,540
	Elementary	30	95,82			
	Secondary	57	90,47			
	High School	51	109,59			
	University	31	95,05			
	Graduate	5	117,70			
Motivation	Illiterate	21	102,88	2,48	5	0,779
	Elementary	30	97,83			
	Secondary	57	90,80			
	High School	51	104,97			
	University	31	93,89			
	Graduate	5	115,00			
Academic achievement	Illiterate	21	85,40	7,03	5	0,219
	Elementary	30	95,38			
	Secondary	57	88,71			
	High School	51	110,35			
	University	31	109,16			
	Graduate	5	77,30			

According to Table 2, no statistically significant effect of the mother's education level was found on the participating fourth-grade students' self-regulated learning ($\chi^2(5) = 4.07, p > .05$), motivation towards social studies ($\chi^2(5) = 2.48, p > .05$), or social studies achievement scores ($\chi^2(5) = 7.03, p > .05$).

3.2- Results on Self-Regulated Learning, Motivation for Social Studies, and Academic Achievement in Social Studies Concerning Father's Education Level

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis-H Test Results for Students' Total Scores in Self-Regulated Learning, Motivation for Social Studies, and Social Studies Achievement by Father's Education Level

Sub-factors	Father's Education Level	N	\bar{x}	χ^2	sd	P
Self-regulated learning	Illiterate	12	93,83	5,03	5	0,412
	Elementary	23	99,20			
	Secondary	41	91,99			
	High School	47	91,80			
	University	65	109,27			
	Graduate	7	73,43			
Motivation	Illiterate	12	90,83	2,47	5	0,781
	Elementary	23	101,57			
	Secondary	41	89,52			
	High School	47	95,45			
	University	65	103,58			
	Graduate	7	113,50			
Academic Achievement	Illiterate	12	75,21	12,96	5	0,024
	Elementary	23	87,22			
	Secondary	41	87,71			
	High School	47	89,79			
	University	65	116,20			
	Graduate	7	118,96			

As indicated in Table 3, a significant difference was identified in the students' social studies achievement scores based on the father's education level ($\chi^2(5) = 12.96, p < .05$). However, no significant difference was found in their self-regulated learning scores ($\chi^2(5) = 5.03, p > .05$) or in motivation scores for social studies ($\chi^2(5) = 2.47, p > .05$).

3-Results Related to Self-Regulated Learning, Motivation for Social Studies, and Academic Achievement in Social Studies Concerning Monthly Income Level

Table 4. *Kruskal-Wallis-H Test Results for Students' Total Scores in Self-Regulated Learning, Motivation for Social Studies, and Social Studies Achievement by Monthly Income Level*

Sub-factors	Monthly Income Level	N	\bar{x}	χ^2	sd	P
Self-regulated learning	8.500 – 10.000 ₺	68	98,36	0,85	4	0,931
	10.001 – 12.500 ₺	49	96,89			
	12.501 – 15.000 ₺	36	92,25			
	15.001 – 17.500 ₺	28	104,80			
	Other	14	101,32			
Motivation	8.500 – 10.000 ₺	68	95,20	2,37	4	0,668
	10.001 – 12.500 ₺	49	100,38			
	12.501 – 15.000 ₺	36	101,10			
	15.001 – 17.500 ₺	28	105,80			
	Other	14	79,71			
Academic Achievement	8.500 – 10.000 ₺	68	93,30	12,71	4	0,013
	10.001 – 12.500 ₺	49	80,19			
	12.501 – 15.000 ₺	36	104,85			
	15.001 – 17.500 ₺	28	122,16			
	Other	14	117,21			

According to Table 4, a statistically significant difference was found in social studies achievement scores based on the monthly income level of the fourth-grade elementary school students ($\chi^2(4) = 12.71, p < .05$). However, no significant differences were observed in self-regulated learning scores ($\chi^2(4) = 0.85, p > .05$) or motivation scores for social studies ($\chi^2(4) = 2.37, p > .05$).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The findings indicate that no significant differences were found in the fourth-grade students' self-regulated learning skills or motivation towards social studies based on the mother's and father's education levels. Specifically, the mother's education level did not influence the students' academic performance in social studies. In other words, the education levels of the students' mothers did not directly affect their academic achievement in social studies, nor did parental education levels have a direct effect on the students' self-regulated learning and motivation. These findings align with previous studies. Çetin (2022) found no significant difference in total scores for self-regulated learning strategies and their subdimensions in mathematics for fourth-grade students based on parental education levels. Similarly, Aydın (2018) determined that parents' education levels did not directly influence children's self-regulation skills. In a study by Özbey (2018), the mother's education level was found to not affect self-regulation and motivation levels.

The findings of this study are contradicted by some prior research. Ertürk Kara and Gönen (2015) found that children of highly educated parents tended to develop self-regulated learning skills more effectively, including time management, focus, and coping with challenges. Similarly, Özbey (2018) determined that the father's education level affected students' self-regulation and motivation levels. In another study, a significant difference in self-regulation skills was found in favor of students whose mothers were university graduates (Gür, 2018; Yılmaz, 2020). Yılmaz (2020) further noted a significant difference in students' goal-setting and planning skills, subcomponents of self-regulation, favoring students with fathers educated at the middle school and university levels.

The analysis of the participating fourth-grade students' academic achievement in social studies also highlighted the father's education level as a significant factor. The findings reveal that as fathers' education levels increase, their children's social studies scores tend to improve on average. Those students whose fathers held university or graduate degrees demonstrated higher academic achievement. Supporting this result, Çetin (2022) observed that students with highly educated fathers also showed superior academic performance in mathematics. Similarly, Erkal (2013) found that the father's education level, whether high school, middle school, primary school, or literate, directly impacted children's academic success.

An examination of the participating fourth-grade students' academic achievement in social studies revealed that the mother's education level had no significant impact on the students' social studies performance. In contrast to this finding, Erkal (2013) observed that the mother's education level – whether high school, literate, primary, or middle school – directly affected children's academic achievement.

The results of this study also indicated that the students' total scores in self-regulated learning and motivation for social studies did not vary significantly based on the family's monthly income level. Contradicting this finding, other studies found that as family income levels increased, so did students' levels of self-regulated learning (Otto & Atkinson, 1997; Karakurt, 2019; Şahin, 2019). Nartgün and Çakır (2014) further noted a rise in motivation with increasing income levels. Similarly, Farooq et al. (2011) reported that socioeconomic status significantly impacted student motivation.

A significant relationship was observed between the fourth-grade students' academic achievement in social studies and their parents' monthly income level. Specifically, those students with a monthly family income of 15,001–17,500 TRY had higher academic achievement compared to the other students, indicating a significant impact of income level on academic success. This result is supported by other research showing that higher family income levels have a substantial effect on academic achievement (Otto & Atkinson, 1997; Gök, 2015). These findings collectively highlight the link between income level and academic success.

Recommendations

1. The “Social Studies Motivation Scale”, the “Self-Regulated Learning Inventory”, and the “Social Studies Achievement Scale” can be administered multiple times over an academic

term to fourth-grade students, allowing for longitudinal analysis of changes in motivation, self-regulation, and achievement.

2. Qualitative research could be conducted with students whose fathers hold a graduate degree, utilizing semi-structured interview tools within a qualitative methodology to gain deeper insights into the impact of paternal education on student motivation and self-regulated learning.

3. Focus group interviews, designed with a qualitative approach, can be conducted with students from families with a monthly income level of 15,001 to 17,500 TRY to further explore the effects of socioeconomic status on academic achievement and motivational factors in social studies.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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Ethical Statement

The research underwent ethical review by the Ethics Committee of the Graduate Education Institute at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and was approved as ethically appropriate under decision number 04/67 on March 30, 2023. The study was derived from the first author Abdullah Baki GÜLLÜ's master's thesis.

Credit Author Statement

Author 1: Responsible for conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, project administration, resource acquisition, software application, visualization, drafting the original manuscript, and writing, reviewing, and editing.

Author 2: Contributed to conceptualization, methodology, software utilization, and writing, including review and editing.

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