



Utilizing Family Involvement Activities in a Social Studies Course: An Action Research Study *

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Abstract

In the social studies course, which has the function of preparing individuals for social life, it is very important to benefit from social resources. The family is an important social resource that can be used to channel the lives of students into the social studies classroom environment. This study explores how family involvement can be utilized in a social studies course, and examines the views of students, families and teachers for the use of family involvement activities in a social studies course. In the study, action research design, which is a recognized qualitative research method, was employed. The study was conducted with the participation of 5th grade students of a public middle school in the fall semester of the 2016–2017 academic year, along with the parents and social studies teachers of these students. The data for the study were collected from personal information forms, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observations, student anecdote notebooks, family cooperation notebooks, a research diary and voice records of the validity committee, and was subjected to a descriptive data analysis. As a result of the research, it was found that it is possible to teach social studies lesson with activities based on various family participation at home, school and outside school. In the research, it was concluded that teaching social studies lesson with activities based on family participation provides various benefits to students, families and social studies teachers. Family involvement activities at home, at school and outside school as part of such were course were found to strengthen family-child relationships, to help family members spend quality time together, to strengthen relationships between the family, the student and the teacher, and to give families the opportunity to observe the classroom environment. Based on these findings, the study was concluded by making various recommendations for further research and implementation.

Keywords

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Introduction

Family and school, the two most important institutions shaping the personality of an individual, maintain a reciprocal and natural relationship. The family is institution that provides unplanned, informal education to children, whereas the formal, planned education is provided by school (Yapıcı, 2010). Accordingly, the integration of the family and school for social purposes is highly important for the education of healthy individuals (Akkaya, 2007). In this context, an important requirement is that parents, as the first teachers encountered by children, become consciously involved in the education of their children in a systematic manner, and share the responsibility for education with the school (Gür & Kurt, 2011).

Family involvement refers to any activities designed for parents and other family members that contribute to the development and education of their children (Akkaya, 2007). Since family participation is an important part of the school's democratization process, participation in education can be considered as the family's right. (Chan & Chui, 1997). In addition to supporting the cognitive and social development of students, family involvement also has positive effects on the personal and parental development of families (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Family involvement can be at a school level or at the level of individual courses. In primary school and middle school curricula, the social studies course is the most appropriate time for family involvement, as it focuses on basic daily life skills and covers the subject of family (Türe & Deveci, 2017).

Defined as *"a field of study that utilizes the concepts and methods of social sciences and humanities to examine people's interactions with their physical and social environments with an interdisciplinary approach in the time dimension and aims to raise democratic citizens who are equipped with basic democratic values about life in a globalized world"* (Doğanay, 2003, p. 17), social studies prepare individuals for life by providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills and values. The social studies course aims to prepare students to the social life as democratic citizens by helping them acquire knowledge, skills and values that they can use in their daily lives. Family is an important resource that can be used to achieve these goals of the social studies course. Families are expected to foster such internalized values as respect, love, tolerance, compassion and hospitality, so that children also gain the ability to internalize and reinforce these values taught in the social studies course. Families can ensure that they internalize and reflect the values learned in the social studies lesson through practices such as helping the needy individuals living in the community, approaching and tolerating individuals with diversity, giving the child a voice in making decisions at home and respecting the views of the family member. In addition, family life and the importance of the family institution are among the topics covered by the social studies course. Accordingly, it is important to design teaching activities in such a way that the family can be involved, ensuring that the aims of the social studies course can be reached.

In the relevant literature, different researchers have proposed family involvement models that can serve as a basis for efforts to achieve family involvement in the social studies course (Berger, 2008; Epstein, 2010b; Gordon, 1979, as cited in Bauch, 1994; Hill & Taylor, 2004). The family involvement model proposed by Gordon (1979, as cited in Bauch, 1994) has three categories: a parent impact model, a school impact model, and a community impact model. The family involvement model proposed by Hill and Taylor (2004) consists of two dimensions: social interaction and social control. In Berger's (2008) family involvement model there are six dimensions; the family as a teacher, the family as a decision-maker, the family as an observer, the family as a temporary observer, the family as a voluntary resource, and the family as a source of employment. Epstein's (2008, 2010b) family involvement model, on the other hand, consists of six dimensions, parenting, learning at home, communicating, decision making, volunteering, and collaborating with the community.

Various activities can be launched based on these models so as to ensure family involvement in the teaching and learning processes of social studies course. For their own family involvement programs, social studies teachers can create additional dimensions depending on the needs and interests of their students' parents. In addition, social studies teachers can develop family involvement

activities that are specific to their schools by taking into account the diversity of families in the school and the school environment (Coleman & Churchill, 1997).

Many researchers have carried out studies stressing the importance of, and the need for, family involvement in school and in individual courses (Ahioğlu Lindberg, 2014; Aksu & Karaçöp, 2015; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Argon & Kıyıcı, 2012; Aslanargun, 2007; Auerbach, 2009; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2013; Çamlıbel Çakmak, 2000; Deveci, 2008; Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gür & Kurt, 2011; Hacısalihoğlu-Karadeniz, Aksu, & Topal, 2012; Herrell, 2011; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005; Jones, 1993; Karataş & Karaman, 2010; Kılıç, 2010; Lawson, 2003; Morris & Taylor, 1998; Patrikakou, 2016; Ross, 2018; Selanik Ay & Aydoğdu, 2016; Sheldon, 2003, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Şaban, 2011; Şad & Gürbüz Türk, 2013; Şeker, 2009; Tezel Şahin & Özbey, 2007; Troncale, 2011; Tümkaya, 2017; Üzüvar, 2010; Walhof, 2016; Wilder, 2014; Wright, 2009). In some of these studies report that family involvement increases academic achievement in students, contributes to the development of social skills and self-confidence in the student, increases school attendance rates, supports the professional development of teachers and improves teacher motivation (Akkaya, 2007; Argon & Kıyıcı, 2012; Aslanargun, 2007; Atakan, 2010; Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2013; Çamlıbel Çakmak, 2000; Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005; Jones, 1993; Kılıç, 2010; Lawson, 2003; Morris & Taylor, 1998; Sheldon, 2007; Tezel Şahin & Özbey, 2007; Troncale, 2011; Walhof, 2016; Wilder, 2014). In addition, there are also studies reporting that family involvement provides parents with additional knowledge, and thus contributes to their own personal development, while also improving the communication between teachers and families (Aslanargun, 2007; Barge & Loges, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jones, 1993).

Some studies in the literature have shown that teachers and families encounter problems in ensuring family participation, parents do not find themselves academically adequately knowledgeable and self-confident to attend schools and lessons, and these reasons negatively affect their participation in education (Aksu & Karaçöp, 2015; Coleman & Churchill, 1997; Gültekin & Kılıç, 2014; Gür & Kurt, 2011). In addition, parents who participated in a study conducted by Hacısalihoğlu-Karadeniz et al. (2012) reported that they needed planned teaching activities to help them support their children.

In studies involving teachers analyzing how to get the family involved in their children's education found that teachers encounter problems achieving family involvement (Morris & Taylor, 1998; Selanik Ay & Aydoğdu, 2016). In a study conducted by Selanik Ay and Aydoğdu (2016), it was found that classroom teachers viewed family involvement as a form of parent-teacher meeting, and this situation demonstrated shortcomings regarding the sort of activities that would enable family involvement in their courses. Moreover, Morris and Taylor (1998) reported that teachers were enthusiastic about family involvement with the school and with individual courses, but that they were unaware of how to ensure family involvement.

There are a limited number of studies in literature on the involvement of the family in social studies courses (Deveci, 2008; Karataş & Karaman, 2010; Troncale, 2011). Deveci (2008) examined the views of parents and students on social studies course. Karataş and Karaman (2010) focused on the level of school-parent cooperation in the implementation of the 2004 Social Studies Curriculum. Troncale (2011), on the other hand, examined the ways in which teachers encourage parent and community involvement in social studies courses.

The dimensions of family involvement proposed by Epstein (2010a), who has carried out numerous studies on family involvement over three decades, have been used in many studies (Ahioğlu Lindberg, 2014; Catsambis, 2001; Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Herrell, 2011; Sanders, 1999; Sanders, Sheldon, & Epstein, 2005; Simon, 2004; Şaban, 2011; Tümkaya, 2017). Observing that family involvement is beneficial for students, contributes to the development of the school, allows parents to support teachers and, strengthens families, Epstein (2010a) argued that various activities need to be developed to enable effective participation by all families. The Social Studies course is suitable for the participation of all families, as it is based on daily life and covers many topics that families experience

in their own lives. In the present study, various activities are developed that enable the efficient participation of families in the social studies course. The goal was to integrate families with the social studies course content, and to help students practice what they learn within their daily lives.

As observed by Fan and Chen (2001), the number of experimental and practice-oriented studies aiming to achieve family involvement in school and within individual courses is very limited. Hornby (2011) notes that there are various studies in literature citing the benefits of family involvement to students, teachers, and parents, but Hornby (2011) identifies a gap between theory and practice, as many of these studies are descriptive by nature yet not practice-oriented. The limited number of studies on achieving family involvement in social studies courses are descriptive (Deveci, 2008; Karataş & Karaman, 2010; Troncale, 2011). This study aims to fill the gap between theory and practice by developing various activities that enable family involvement in the social studies course, and that helps the teacher, students, and parents who participate in this study to achieve various outcomes. The study thus constitutes an important contribution to the literature in this regard.

Objective

The present study explores how to achieve family involvement in the social studies course through various activities, and examines the opinions of students, families and social studies teachers on social studies courses conducted with family involvement activities. In this context, the study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What can be done to achieve family involvement in the social studies course?
 - What kind of home, school and out-of-school family involvement activities can be designed?
 - How can families participate in the home, school and out-of-school family involvement activities related to the social studies course?
2. What are the opinions of students, families and social studies teachers on social studies courses conducted with family involvement activities?

Method

This section covers the research design, participants, the setting, the role of the practicing researcher, the role of the validity committee, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and plausibility.

Research Design

In this study, various activities were developed to achieve family involvement in the social studies course, and these activities were then implemented and evaluated. As the study involves developing a teaching activity and supporting the professional development of a social studies teacher in the classroom in which the activity is to be implemented, the action research design was deemed the most appropriate for the purposes of the study. The aim was to improve the quality of teaching and student learning by conducting the social studies course with family involvement-based teaching activities.

Johnson (2015, p. 329) defines action research as *“the process of studying actual classroom or school situations in order to assess and improve the quality of actions and teaching”*. An important goal in action research is to achieve social change by empowering and cooperating with individuals for their development (Aksoy, 2003). For the present study, the social studies course was conducted in cooperation with the researchers, the participating families, students and the social studies teacher. The study contributed to social change by helping students transfer their learning to their daily lives, helping families achieve various outcomes and supporting the professional development of the social studies teacher.

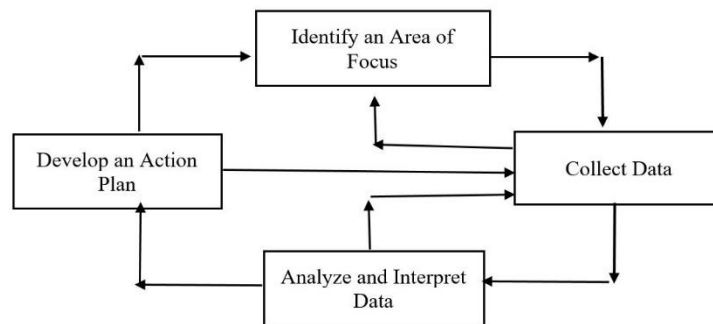


Figure 1. Dialectical Cycle of Action Research (Mills, 2003, p. 19)

Various spiral and cyclical models have been proposed in literature for the conducting of an action research (Berg, 2001; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Mills, 2003; Stringer, 2008). “An action research involves four steps: identifying the area of focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting the data, and developing an action plan” (Mills, 2003, p.19). The present study was conducted using the action research dialectical cycle proposed by Mills (2003), shown in Figure 1.

Identifying the area of focus is the first step in an action research. To identify the area of focus, the researchers first made a reviewed of literature on family involvement (Creswell, 2008; Mills, 2003). Studies conducted in Turkey and elsewhere have examined the effect that family involvement has on the education of children, and academic achievement in particular, and have identified various problems encountered by teachers in achieving family involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005; Jones, 1993; Kılıç, 2010; Morris & Taylor, 1998; Sheldon, 2007; Selanik Ay & Aydoğdu, 2016; Tezel Şahin & Özbey, 2007; Walhof, 2016), although we were unable to find a practice-oriented study on how to achieve family involvement in individual courses. Interviews held with teachers, administrators and other stakeholders can also be used to learn about the different perspectives when identifying the area of focus in an action research (Gürgür, 2016; Mertler, 2014). In the present study, following the review of literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six social studies teachers on the issue of family involvement in the social studies course from April 1–15, 2016.

The interviews aimed to collect information on achieving family involvement in the social studies course, for which the participating social studies teachers were asked the following question: “Do you involve families in your social studies course? Please elaborate.” to which one of the respondent social studies teachers gave the following response:

Teacher 2: *We call on the parents only when there’s a problem. Only two out of 10 parents show up for the parent-teacher meetings anyway, and the attitude of families is as follows: ‘Either my child has gotten into trouble and the teacher is going to complain about my child, or they will ask for donations.’ Many families have limited financial resources ...*

Another question directed at social studies teachers in these interviews was: “What activities do you conduct to achieve family involvement in the social studies course, and what activities would you recommend?” Some of the responses given by the social studies teachers to this question were as follows:

Teacher 1: *When you think about it, our course requires more family involvement than other courses. This is because not all families may know about science or mathematics, while our course is basically about general knowledge. It has history topics and it has geography topics. It is basically about what the children need to know for their daily lives. What I am trying to say is that social studies need to be more integrated with life, as I don’t think we are preparing them for life. As our course has the aim of preparing students for life, families are really important in this matter. It is also very important that they provide support, as we cannot teach the entire culture of the society by ourselves. The culture taught by the family is also very important.*

Teacher 6: *I really cannot think of an activity right now, I never thought about it before. We have not planned or conducted any projects with their involvement. We are all trying to teach something, but after this interview with you I'll probably have a different view on this. I mean, what can be done? Really, what can be done directly to involve the families?*

Teacher 3: *Most of the topics we cover in this course are from daily life. They concern contemporary events. For example ... Let me think about the recent topics we covered. We asked about the Constitution, for example. I think you were also in that session. What is the Constitution? What do families think about this? Do they know about this or not? We told the students to ask their parents for their opinions, without researching. We did not invite the parents to the school for direct involvement, but we encouraged the students to seek more knowledge from their families.*

The researchers observed the 5th grade social studies course taught by one of the respondent social studies teachers for a total of 24 hours between April 4, 2016 and May 30, 2016, for three hours per week. During these observations, which lasted for around two months, Teacher 3 conducted one activity that could be considered a family involvement activity. The transcript of the in-class discussion of this activity, mentioned by Teacher 3 in the quote above, and the researcher's notes about the same activity are presented below:

Date and time: *May 4, 2016 - 01.00 p.m.*

Teacher 3: *Last week, I told you to ask your parents about the Constitution. Did anyone asked them?*

Student 1: *The Constitution is the main law of a country.*

Teacher 3: *I do not accept this answer. This sounds like a definition from a book or the Internet.*

Student 2: *The Constitution is the supreme law of the state.*

Teacher 3: *Is that all? No one else did the homework? Everyone, please do your homework before our next session or you will get a grade of 1 for your oral assessment.*

Observation note: *In this session, the teacher reacted negatively as only two of the students had done their homework. The teacher asked everyone to complete the task by the next session, and threatened those who didn't with grade of 1 for their oral assessment.*

Date and time: *May 9, 2016 - 03.30 p.m.*

Observation note: *In this session, the teacher did not check the homework assigned in the previous week. I believe the teacher had given this homework the previous week because he knew that I perform observation in the class.*

The statements and observation notes of the respondent social studies teachers showed that the teachers achieved only limited family involvement in the social studies course. Some of the teachers stated that the social studies course was suitable for family involvement, although most said that they did not conduct any activity to this end. The respondent teachers made few recommendations regarding activities that can be conducted to achieve family involvement. Following interviews with the social studies teachers, the researchers identified their area of focus by concluding that the teachers associated the social studies course with family involvement, but there was a need to develop and implement activities to achieve family involvement.

Data collection: The data collection instruments of the study were created based on the area of focus and the research questions. The data for the study was collected using multiple instruments, including interviews with students, families and teachers; student anecdote notebooks and family cooperation notebooks; as well as a research diary video records of activities and audio records of the validity committee meetings, which were used to obtain additional data.

Data analysis and interpretation: The data analysis was conducted in parallel with the data collection. The notebooks detailing student anecdotes and family cooperations were reviewed every week on a regular basis, and the data was summarized. The researchers took notes during the weekly interviews with the students and teachers about the activities. Video records of the activities were reviewed on a weekly basis, and the relevant portions were transcribed. These macro-level analyses carried out by the researchers were presented to the validity committee at weekly meetings, which provided an opportunity for a discussion of the problems encountered during the implementation process, and activity plans were improved based on the committee members' recommendations.

Developing an action plan: In this study, 11 activities were developed, based on a review of literature, to encourage family involvement in the social studies course. Of these activities, nine were prepared in the form of lesson plans, and two were prepared in the form of activity plans, depending on the nature of the activity. Each activity was developed after gaining expert opinions, and then implemented and evaluated, and followed by the development of the next activity. These 11 activities aimed at involving the family in the social studies course were developed on the basis of the six dimensions of family involvement proposed by Epstein (2008, 2010b), namely parenting, learning at home, communicating, decision making, volunteering and collaborating community.

Participants

The study was conducted with a 5th grade class of a middle school in the Tepebaşı central district of the province of Eskişehir, with 29 students. The school was selected as a result of the willingness of the school principal, the social studies class teacher, families and students to participate in the study, and suitability of the physical environment of the school for family activities. The branch teachers experts and social studies teachers interviewed in the information-gathering phase of the study were consulted prior to conducting the study, and upon their recommendation, the study was conducted with 5th grade students based on the opinion that this age group and most of the topics included in the 5th grade of the 2005 Social Studies Curriculum are suitable for family involvement.

During the implementation process, data was collected from all 29 students in the class and from their families. Once the implementation phase was over, notebooks on family cooperation and student anecdotes, as well as video recordings of home activities, were reviewed. The review revealed that 15 students and their families had participated in all of the activities, and the data presented here comes from these 15 students and their families. Focus group interviews were conducted with these participants upon the completion of the implementation phase. Pseudonyms are used when presenting data rather than real names to protect privacy. Table 1 details the personal characteristics of the students and parents participating in the study.

Table 1. Personal Characteristics of Students and Parents

Student Code	Gender	Family Code	Mother's Education Level	Father's Education Level	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Number of Siblings	House Shared By
S1	Male	F1	High school	High school	Housewife	Worker-Farmer	1	Mother, father and sibling
S2	Female	F2	High school	High school	Housewife	Worker	1	Mother, father and sibling
S3	Male	F3	Primary Education	Primary Education	Self-employed	Worker	-	Mother and father
S4	Male	F4	High school	High school	Housewife	Civil servant	1	Mother, father and sibling
S5	Male	F5	Primary Education	High school	Housewife	Worker	-	Mother and father
S6	Female	F6	High school	High school	Housewife	Self-employed	1	Mother, father and sibling
S7	Male	F7	Primary Education	Primary Education	Housewife	Worker	-	Mother and father

Table 1. Continued

Student Code	Gender	Family Code	Mother's Education Level	Father's Education Level	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Number of Siblings	House Shared By
S8	Female	F8	High school	High school	Housewife	Worker	1	Mother, father and sibling
S9	Male	F9	High school	High school	Housewife	Worker	1	Mother, father and sibling
S10	Female	F10	Primary Education	College	Housewife	Civil servant	1	Mother, father and sibling
S11	Male	F11	High school	High school	Housewife	Worker	1	Mother, father and sibling
S12	Female	F12	Primary Education	High school	Worker	Worker	1	Mother, father and sibling
S13	Female	F13	High school	High school	Housewife	Worker	1	Mother, father and sibling
S14	Female	F14	High school	High school	Housewife	Worker	-	Mother and father
S15	Male	F15	College	High school	Housewife	Worker	1	Mother, father and sibling

Of the 5th grade middle school students who participated in the study, seven were female and eight were male; four were the only child in their families while 11 had siblings. In terms of family education levels, most parents were high school graduates; two of the 15 mothers were gainfully employed and the rest were housewives. Most of the fathers who participated in the study were workers, although two were civil servants and one was self-employed. During the implementation phase of the study, the parents participated in home, school and out-of-school activities.

The social studies teacher who participated in the study was female and 41 years old, with an undergraduate degree in Social Studies Teaching and 20 years of professional experience. She was also one of the teachers interviewed to gather information in the stage identifying an area of focus. The social studies teacher volunteered to participate in the study during our interviews and also in her later communications with the researchers. The social studies teacher observed the activities carried out in the implementation phase, shared her opinion regarding these activities with the practitioner researcher, and supported the practitioner researcher when needed.

Setting

The study was conducted in a 5th grade class of a public middle school in the fall semester of the 2016–2017 academic year. The implementation phase of the study was carried out in different settings, including the classroom, in a multi-purpose hall, in a technology design shop, in the students' homes and in a factory. Of the total, five of the 11 activities were conducted in the home and one was conducted in a factory. The activities conducted in houses were video-recorded by family members using smartphones. The out-of-school learning activity carried out in a factory setting was recorded by the the practitioner researcher using a camera. A total of five activities were conducted in a classroom setting. During one such classroom activity, a multi-purpose hall and a technology design shop were also utilized. The classroom activities, were recorded from two different angles using two cameras.

The Role of the Practitioner Researcher

This study had an action research design in which the researcher was also a practitioner. The practitioner researcher who implemented the activities has an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in social studies teaching, and has participated in national and international scientific events on social studies education during which she has made presentations. The practitioner researcher has also published articles in refereed journals tracked by international indexes, has conducted interviews with middle school students and social studies teachers within the framework of various studies and has observed a number of undergraduate courses. In addition, the practitioner researcher was served as a teacher in a private education institution, and currently works as an assistant professor in a social studies teaching program.

The practitioner researcher used interviews to collect data for her master's thesis, and has carried out action researches, interviews, observations and document analyses as part of the requirements of a qualitative research method course she undertook. In addition, she has participated in a number of workshops on qualitative research, and in an "NVIVIO 11 Advanced Training" activity offered by a private institution on January 27–28, 2017.

The practitioner researcher first assumed the role of participant observer in the classroom to get to know the physical environment prior to the implementation of the activities, to develop a rapport with the students participating in the study, and to allow them to get used to the researcher as part of the learning environment. The practitioner researcher acted as an observer for 4 weeks from October 25, 2016 to November 18, 2016, during which she interacted with the students. From November 22, 2016 onwards, the practitioner researcher started teaching the social studies course to help students adapt. A researcher that conducts teaching and at the same time collects data on her teaching is referred to as an active participant observer (Mills, 2003); thus, the practitioner researcher assumed the role of active participant observer during the implementation phase that lasted from December 7, 2016 to January 17, 2017.

Prior to the implementation phase, the practitioner researcher prepared multiple activity plans and received expert opinions on these plans. The researcher also contacted the families prior to implementing the activities, and received their written consent for the study. The practitioner researcher kept a research journal in which she recorded all her observations, thoughts and feelings about the study, starting from before the implementation phase until its completion. For each activity, the practitioner researcher prepared activity instructions for the students and their families. She conducted semi-structured interviews with students and with the social studies teacher on a weekly basis, discussing the activities conducted, reviewing the notebooks on family cooperation and student anecdotes, and transcribing the relevant portions of the video records of activities. The practitioner researcher presented her weekly work to the validity committee in evaluation meetings. Once the implementation phase was over, the researcher conducted focus group interviews with the 15 students and their families who participated in all of the activities.

During the implementation phase, the practitioner researcher carried out a simultaneous macro-level data analysis, classifying all of the data collected during the implementation phase by activity. Once the implementation phase was over, she re-analyzed all the data that had undergone macro analysis, this time using NVIVO 11 software. The practitioner researcher endeavored to be objective in the presentation and interpretation of the findings, presenting both the positive and negative opinions expressed by the participants on the activities and the research process, and took care to include the views of all participants.

The Role of the Validity Committee

A group of three area experts was formed as a "Validity Committee", who were asked to express their opinions on the activity plans during the implementation phase, to check the collected data, to make recommendations for overcoming the encountered problems and to peer check the implementation process. The Validity Committee was formed to provide expert opinion during the planning and implementation of the activities, and to make an expert evaluation of the activities. Validity Committee consisted of one full professor and two associate professors. Committee members conduct studies on social studies education, and one of the members teaches courses in qualitative research methods at a graduate level. Weekly regular meetings were held with the members of the Validity Committee throughout the implementation phase, and the meetings were recorded using an audio recorder, with the opinions of the committee members used as an additional source of data.

A video checklist was created for the observations made from video recordings (Elliott, 1991) and to see whether or not individuals engaged in certain behaviors (Freankel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). The video checklist, which was created by the researchers, contained items related to the targets of

students and families from the activity plans, and targets for the practitioner researcher regarding the teaching process. For each target on the video checklist, three options were provided: “yes,” “partially” and “no.” During the evaluation meetings with the Validity Committee, the members watched the videos of the activities, and the Committee members rated whether or not, in their opinion, the targets on the video checklist had been met.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in the fall semester of the 2016–2017 academic year, within the framework of the “Get To Know Our Region” chapter of the learning area “People, Places and Environments,” and two learning outcomes of the chapter “What We Produce” within the learning area “Production, Distribution, and Consumption” in the 5th grade of the 2005 Social Studies Curriculum. These chapters of the social studies course were conducted with family involvement activities.

Prior to implementation, 4 weeks of observations were made from October 25–November 18, 2016, and the study was implemented over 19 class hours from December 7, 2016–January 17, 2017. During this period, the students and their families engaged in family involvement activities in their homes, outside class hours. Together with the observation period prior to implantation, the research took around 12 weeks.

Qualitative data collection methods were used in line with the action research design of the study (Mills, 2003). Data for the first research question of the study were collected from student personal information forms; semi-structured interviews with families, students and the social studies teacher; student anecdote notebooks; family cooperation notebooks; observations; the research diary; and the audio recordings of the Validity Committee meetings.

Semi-structured interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted after every activity, throughout the implementation phase, with students who participated in the activity, with the social studies teacher and with the parents who participated in the school activities as instructors. The questions posed during these interviews were prepared prior to the implementation phase, taking into account the opinions of four experts. Once the implementation phase was over, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the social studies teacher to hear her opinions of the overall research process and conducting the social studies course with family involvement activities.

Student anecdote notebooks: Students anecdote notebooks were used as data gathering instruments to collect the written opinions of the students about the activities. Following every family involvement activity, the students wrote their opinions of the activity in the anecdote notebooks.

Family cooperation notebooks: Family cooperation notebooks are data gathering instruments in which the instructions for the family activities are kept together with the opinions of the family on the activities during the implementation phase. The instructions for the home activities were attached to the family cooperation notebooks by the students after each activity was introduced in the classroom. The family members conducted the activities in line with these instructions, and provided their opinions of the activity on the page opposite the instructions.

Research diary: The practitioner researcher used this diary as an additional data gathering instrument. The researcher carrying out the implementation recorded her observations and thoughts about every stage of research in this diary. The researcher carrying out the implementation recorded a wealth of data in the diary about the planning stage; her observations, feelings and thoughts during the implementation of activities; the difficulties encountered; the meetings she held during the implementation phase; her comments about family cooperation and the student anecdote notebooks; and the decisions of the Validity Committee.

Observations: Observational data for the study was collected using two tripod-mounted video cameras that recorded the activities conducted in the classroom. One of the cameras recorded the students and the other was directed at the practitioner researcher and the blackboard. The activities

engaged in by the students with their families at home were recorded on video using smartphones and sent to the practitioner researcher using the social media app WhatsApp.

Data from the validity committee meetings: During the evaluation meetings with the Validity Committee, the views and recommendations of the committee members on the activities were recorded using an audio recorder. The audio recordings were transcribed and the views and recommendations of the Validity Committee members regarding each activity were used as additional data.

Focus group interviews: Once the implementation phase was over, data were collected from focus group interviews held with families and students to hear the participants' views on the social studies course, the family involvement activities and the overall research process. At the end of the implementation phase, the students and families who had participated in the activities were identified, and interview questions were formulated aimed at obtaining the views of these participants of the social studies course conducted with family involvement. The interview questions were evaluated by four area experts, who said that it was possible to collect data from the families and the students in a rapid manner, and that the interaction between the participants during a focus group interviews could enrich the data. The area experts recommended holding focus group interviews to hear the opinions of the participants on the overall research process. Following this recommendation, it was decided to hold focus group interviews with the participants, in which a total of 30 people participated, consisting of 15 students and 15 parents who participated in all of the activities. The focus group interviews were conducted separately for the parent and student groups.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The garnered data were analyzed in two stages. A descriptive analysis during the data collection process, as required in an action research, and analyses carried out after the data collection was complete. During the implementation phase, the data were subjected to a descriptive analysis at the macro level, and once the implantation phase was over, a micro-level descriptive analysis was carried out.

The data analysis started during the implementation phase. The researchers reviewed student anecdote notebooks and family cooperation notebooks on a regular basis throughout the implementation phase to summarize the data for each activity, and to provide feedback to the families and students. Following each family involvement activity, the researchers held interviews with the students who had conducted the activity with their families, and with the social studies teacher who observed the activity. The researchers took notes during these interviews conducted in the implementation phase to highlight any important points. The researchers also analyzed the video recordings following every activity at a macro level, and made a written analysis. These macro-level analyses were carried out on a regular basis, simultaneously with the data collection during the implementation phase, and were presented, along with video recordings, to the Validity Committee during the weekly committee meetings. Thanks to these analyses throughout the implementation phase of the study, the opinions of multiple observers were obtained and their ideas about the study.

The data analysis carried out after the implementation phase was over involved the transcription of the data into a written format, the creation of a framework for a descriptive analysis, a review of all data, the processing of the data based on the thematic frame (coding the data and comparing the codings), and the description and interpretation of the findings.

Once the implementation phase was over, the researchers reviewed all of the collected data from the implementation phase regarding on first research question, and then transformed it into a written format. The researchers classified all of the data by activity. The video recordings, research diary and data from the Validity Committee were used as additional data. A "Student Views" dataset was created for the data collected using the student anecdote notebooks and from the semi-structured interviews with the students; a "Family Views" dataset was created based on the data collected using

the family cooperation notebooks and from the semi-structured interviews with the families; and a "Teacher Views" dataset was created based on data obtained during the semi-structured interviews with the social studies teacher.

Themes were created for the transcripts of the focus group interviews conducted at the end of the implementation phase for the second research question of the study, and these were based on the interview questions, adopting a descriptive analysis approach. "Student Views", "Family Views" and "Teacher Views" datasets were created for the data falling under each theme.

All of the data collected in the study was uploaded into NVIVO 11 Qualitative Data Analysis Software and coded. Support was received from two experts regarding the test coding for the study. The experts who provided support during test coding were PhD students involved in social studies education with related undergraduate and master's degrees.

The findings of the study are presented in a descriptive manner under two headings based on the research questions. Under the first heading, information is provided related to the planning and implementation of family involvement-based activities for the social studies course. Direct quotes from the participants related to the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course are also presented under this heading. Under the second heading, the views of students, families and the teacher on the social studies course conducted with family involvement, and on the implementation phase, are presented based on the four main themes identified from an analysis of the data garnered from the focus group interviews.

Plausibility

To achieve plausibility in the study, strategies of credibility, transferability, consistency and verifiability were used (Stringer, 2008; Uzuner, 2005; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). To this end, the practitioner researcher spent around three months in the research environment, from October 25, 2016 to January 17, 2017, including the pre-implementation phase. All activities conducted during the implementation phase were video recorded while all interviews were audio recorded. Some of the audio and video recordings were reviewed by an expert with a PhD in the field of social studies education, and the accuracy of the recordings was confirmed. After the implementation phase, two experts receiving PhD education in the teaching of social studies were consulted while creating the codes and themes to be used for the analysis of the collected data.

A validity committee comprising three area experts was created for the credibility strategy. The Weekly evaluation meetings were held with the Validity Committee on a regular basis during the implementation phase. The video recordings were transcribed and analyzed at the macro level to aid in the review by the members of the Validity Committee. This allowed the Validity Committee members to observe the practitioner researcher, the students and the learning environments by using the video checklist.

To ease transferability, the researchers collected in-depth data using different data collection instruments. The researchers described the entire research process in a detailed manner. To ensure consistency, the activity plan steps for all activities conducted during the implementation phase followed the same order. Expressions indicating specific meanings and concepts were treated in the same manner to ensure conceptual consistency in the coding process, and opinions were obtained from the same experts regarding the entire process.

To achieve verifiability, the practitioner researcher who conducted the activities reflected on the study throughout the pre-implementation and implementation processes in her diary. In addition, the researchers strived to be objective in the presentation and interpretation of the data, using direct quotes.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study under two main headings: “Findings on the Achievement of Family Involvement in the Social Studies Course,” and “Findings on Student, Family and Teacher Views Regarding the Social Studies Course Conducted with Family Involvement Activities.”

Findings on the Achievement of Family Involvement in the Social Studies Course

This section presents information about the process of conducting family involvement activities in the social studies course, and explains the ways in which families participated in the activities. Also presented here are the findings of the 11 family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, and data obtained from the participants regarding these 11 activities.

The Process of Conducting Family Involvement Activities in the Social Studies Course

A total of 11 family involvement-based activities were conducted in the 5th grade social studies course during the implementation phase of the study, of which five were conducted at home, five at school and one outside the school. These activities were, in the order they were conducted, as follows: Family meeting; family members assuming the role of learners; utilizing family members as sources; utilizing designated days and weeks in the social studies course: Voluntary family participation; family members assuming the role of instructors, game-based learning with family involvement, family-student presentation; learning at school with family involvement; studying with family elders; studying with fathers; and out-of-school learning with family involvement: The Sugar Factory trip.

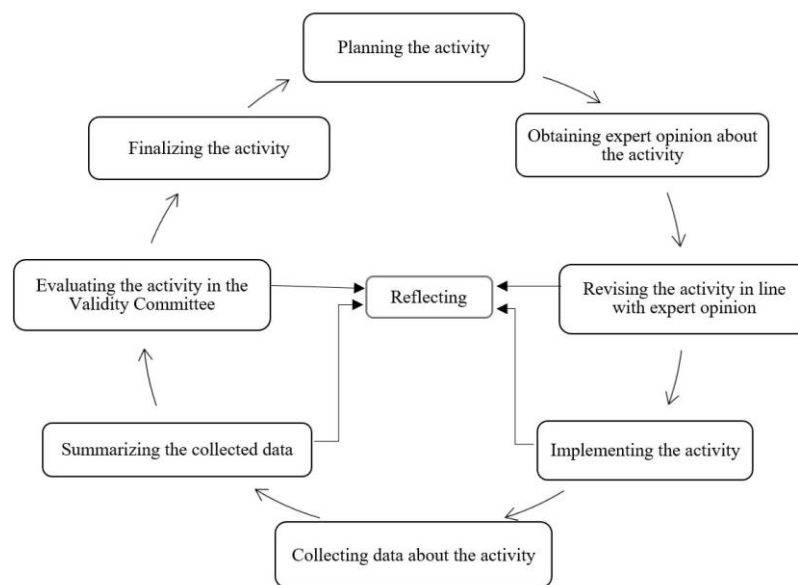


Figure 2. Activity Plan Development Cycle for the Implementation Phase

The path followed for the creation the activity plans within the implementation phase is given in Figure 2. The activities conducted in the implementation phase were planned in line with the learning outcomes specified in the 5th grade of the 2005 Social Studies Curriculum.

As the cycle of developing activity plans for implementation phase shows, the planned activity was first presented to the members of the Validity Committee to obtain their opinions, and the activity was revised and implemented on the basis of their feedback. Following the implementation of the activity, the opinions of the students, family and teacher of the activity were obtained. This feedback and video recordings of the activities were summarized and presented to the members of the Validity Committee in weekly meetings, and the activity was finalized in line with the views expressed by the committee members during these meetings. The activity planning stage was then initiated for the next activity after obtaining expert opinion. Throughout this process, the researcher who conducted the

activities reflected on the obtaining of expert opinion for the activity, the implementation of the activity, the collection of data for the activity, the summarizing of the collected data, the and evaluation of the activity in the Validity Committee meeting. This cycle was repeated for each activity. During the implementation phase, more than one family involvement activity per week was conducted, meaning that the cycle was repeated multiple times every week.

The study established that families could participate in the 11 family involvement activities conducted at home, at school and outside school for the social studies course in different ways. The findings from the process of conducting these 11 family involvement activities within the social studies course are reported in the following.

Family Meeting Activity

First, a family meeting activity was held at the school to get to know the families who would be participating in the study, to inform them about the study and to answer any questions they may have about the study. An invitation letter was prepared to invite the families to the family meeting and was sent to the families through the students. The family meeting was attended by an expert in the field of social studies education, the social studies teacher, the researcher conducting the activities and a total of 20 family members, 17 of them mothers, two fathers and one older brother.

The analysis of the data in the family cooperation notebooks showed that family members found this activity to be “useful for students”, “informative”, “beneficial”, “sincere”, “awareness-raising” and “motivating.” One family member reported discovering, thanks to what was shared during the family meeting activity, that other families had similar issues with their children: *“I attended the meeting. My son was very enthusiastic about this and insisted I attend. The meeting was very sincere. Sometimes you think that you’re the only one having problems with your child at home. After listening to what was said, however, you I realized that I was not alone (F15).”* Another family member reported realizing, following the family meeting, that they did not spend enough time with their children and did not give them enough responsibilities: *“I realized in the meeting that we really do not spend much time with our children; we do not assign them any responsibilities apart from their studies. We never sit down and have discussions with our children. It would be a nice thing to come together as a family and research and discuss things. I wonder what the adults will think and what the children will think about issues (F1).”*

An analysis of the data from the meeting revealed that the social studies teacher believed “there were teacher-related problems”, “expert participation at the meeting was effective” and “the families had sufficient knowledge of the study” with regards to the family meeting activity. The social studies teacher expressed the following ideas about the family meeting activity:

“It was something that we haven’t been able to do that much. Was it undoable? In fact, it was very easy. We invited them, and they came. It was very good, because this was what the families were also expecting. The families also want someone to invite them to school. That is what I observed. I keep thinking, what is the problem with the families? Why do they act like this in middle school? Why don’t they come to the school? It turns out they were expecting something from us, the problem was with us. This is what I realized. They came when we asked them to. They also asked what was on their minds. In particular, families were impressed that the professor was also here. I think it was a success.”

Family members assuming the role of learners

As the second activity in the implementation phase, the family members were to act as learners, and the students would tell the family members what they had learned at school. In the activity, first, the topic of the surface features of a geographical region was covered in the class and students were asked to tell their family members about what they had learned.

Instructions were prepared for the families and students to provide guidance on the activity, and these were handed out to the students after explaining how to conduct the activity. The instructions for the family members were attached to the family cooperation notebooks, and the activity guidelines explained the purpose of the activity in detail, and underlined the tasks assigned to the students and

family members within the activity. The student instructions provided information on the website to be used when conducting the activity, and the names of the surface features to be examined together with family members. The family instructions emphasized the need for family members to support the children. The activity was conducted within the framework of the topic "Getting to know my region" and the learning outcome "Recognizing the surface features of one's own region on the relief map of Turkey" from the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005.

According to the data garnered from the interviews and the student anecdote notebooks, the students found the activity to "result in better learning," "help in understanding the teacher better", "help develop self-confidence", "help in the acquisition of new knowledge", "develop self-expression skills" and to "make me proud to be conducting the activity". Furthermore, the students "made preparations for the activity", "provided family members with new knowledge", "felt like a grown-up, as if they were a teacher", "would like to repeat the activity" and "found the activity to be fun and exciting". One of the students wrote in the anecdote notebook that they had conducted research in preparation for the activity, and that the activity had made them feel like a teacher: *"For this homework I researched some of the places assigned by my teacher. As I conducted my research, I also learned where they were. For example, the Taurus Mountains are in the Mediterranean region. We looked at the satellite images of these places. Acting as a teacher for my family made me feel like I was a real teacher (S4)."* Another student reported in their interview that the activity had been instructive and had made her experience positive emotions: *"At that moment, I felt like I was a grown up, and that I had become a teacher; this was how I felt. I really enjoyed conducting an activity with my father. It helped me learn more about surface features, I learned better. This will be very useful in the social studies course. With this activity, I both learned things and repeated the topic (S10)."*

According to data garnered from the family cooperation notebooks, the family members reported that the activity "had made me see how knowledgeable the children were", "made me proud of my child", "made the children happy", "increased the children's enthusiasm for learning" and "was fun, exciting, interesting and useful." One family member had the following to say about how the activity had been useful for their child:

"It was a very successful and fun activity. When my daughter told me about the topic, I listened with great excitement, as if I was hearing it for the first time. I asked her about things I was curious about, and she responded to my questions diligently, as if she were my teacher. The visual work was also very useful in terms of helping her remember things. Her younger sibling at home also listened very attentively to her sister. I am sure they also learned many things. We have learned a lot of things from ... (the student) (F2)."

According to the interview data, the social studies teacher reported that the activity in which family members assumed the role of learners "contributed to the education of the family", "allowed the repetition of what was learned," and "made families learn about their children's level of knowledge". The social studies teacher had the following to say about the activity: *"Here, the child will teach something to their family members, and they will also have repeated their learning. It was useful in this sense. Families don't know about their children's level of knowledge, and in this way, they learn about this as well. Furthermore, the families will know what we have covered in class. There are a lot of things that can be said. It is a successful activity, of course. I wish we could do it all the time."*

Utilizing family members as sources

Utilizing family members as sources was the third activity conducted in the implementation phase. In this activity, the family members attended the class and shared their knowledge and experience of the topic with the students. In the pre-implementation observation period, a personal information form was created for the students to fill out. The family members' occupations, as reported on the personal information forms, were examined. Taking into account the learning outcome, a farming family was invited to the class. The family member invited to the class as a source was contacted prior to the class session and was informed about the sort of knowledge expected to be shared with the students in class, and how the class was conducted.

This activity was conducted within the framework of the topic “Getting to know my region” and the learning outcome “Explaining the effects of climate in the region on human activities, with examples from daily life”, as defined in the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005. The family member who participated in the activity as a source provided information to the students concerning the learning outcome. The students directed their questions about the topic to the family member who participated in class as a source. The family member who participated in the activity as a source left the class toward the end of the class session, and the topic was summarized by the researcher conducting the activity

According to the data garnered from interviews and student anecdote notebooks, the students reported that the activity “provided me with new knowledge”, “helped me learn the topic better, as corn, wheat and barley were examined”, “was nice and interesting”, “was fun and exciting” and “helped me see that women are knowledgeable about farming”, and that they had “told my family about what I had learned in class”. One student had the following to say about the new knowledge they had acquired: *“I never knew what wheat and barley were like. I knew their names, but I had never held them in my hand. I got to look at them. My friend’s mother talked about farming. For example, I would have never imagined that snow covers plants. This is what I learned (S8).”* The student whose family member participated in the activity as a source wrote the following about the activity in the anecdote notebook: *“My teacher and mom came to class together. When my mom said she was a farmer, everyone asked her questions. It was nice for my friends had my mom there, because they didn’t know about these things in detail; the class was fun. I also thought that I knew everything, but it turns out I don’t. My mom told things that I didn’t know either (S1).”*

According to the data garnered from the interview and from the family cooperation notebook, the family member reported that she had “prepared for the activity”, “had the chance to observe her child” and “was excited and happy during the activity”. On being able to observe her child, she said: *“I had no idea that ... (the student) had this side to him. To me, he was like a passive person at home, but I was really surprised to see him at school. I love that he was happy, to be honest, that he participated and raised his hand. I felt proud. I wanted to see it with my own eyes. I made observations, I have observed most children (F1).”* The family member wrote in the family cooperation notebook that she had been excited prior to the activity and explained how she prepared for it:

“I was very excited while preparing for this activity. A couple of days earlier I asked my grandpa and my husband about things I didn’t know. I was confident in myself because I have known about this stuff since I was young; but I was also curious about what they would ask. I came to the school. I entered the class and was really excited, but I was also very happy. I brought barley, wheat and corn samples. There were children who were seeing barley for the first time. Even though it was only a small thing, showing and teaching about this stuff made me very happy (A1).”

During the interview, the social studies teacher stated that the activity utilizing a family member as a source “captured the attention of the students”, “allowed the family member to observe her child in the classroom environment” and “was a nice activity”. Further, she said that the students “saw the family member as an expert, and asked her questions”. The social studies teacher had the following to say about the activity:

“It was a nice activity. It was nice, for example, that a family member came and brought wheat with her. I really enjoyed the children’s questions. They were interested in what was said. An outside expert was in class, and they were asking questions to this person. The family member talked about the issue very well. She also had the chance to observe how her child behaves in class and what he does. These activities are also an opportunity for families to observe their children.”

Utilizing Designated Days and Weeks: Voluntary Family Participation

The researcher who conducted the activities learned that the school would celebrate “Domestic Goods Week”, and came up with the idea of designing a family involvement activity within the framework of the topic of designated days and weeks in the social studies course. For this activity, the researchers defined the following learning outcome: “Recognizing the contribution of producing and

consuming domestic goods to the national economy," and an activity was planned for voluntary family participation in the social studies course within the framework of this outcome.

The activity was announced on the family communication WhatsApp group, and each family expressed their wish to contribute to the activity with different foods and beverages. Among these, seven families were identified who had volunteered to attend the class during the activity, when the purpose and importance of celebrating Domestic Goods Week was discussed. How producing and consuming domestic goods contributes to the national economy was explained, after which, with the help of the participating family members, seats were re-arranged for the activity and the food was served. Following the meal, the leftovers were collected by family members and the seats were rearranged into their previous positions. The family members also helped clean the classroom. Those who attended the class supported the teacher and the students throughout the activity, and had a chance to observe the class in session. Thus, family members attended the class within the framework of the voluntary activities.

In the interviews and student anecdote notebooks, the students reported that they had "learned new things", "learned about sharing", "felt special because family members had participated" and "tasted different foods" during the activity, which "was fun" and in which "family members helped." One of the students wrote in the anecdote notebook that they had learned about sharing through this activity: *"We had lots of fun in the domestic goods celebration, and took pictures. It was very nice. I learned about sharing food. I was excited (S7)."* Another student reported learning new things in the activity and feeling special because her mother had participated: *"For example, I never knew that Domestic Goods Week had another name. I learned that. I also learned what is done with domestic goods. I feel special when my mom is around, so I felt special because my mom was there (S8)."*

According to data garnered from the family cooperation notebooks, the families said that the family participation activity was "useful for the children", "helped students, family members and the teacher get to know each other better" and "allowed families to see the class environment." One of the family members said that the activity was fun and allowed them see the class environment: *"Kids find these sorts of activities fun. I, too, enjoyed making preparations. I also got to see my son in the classroom environment. I saw and met his friends. It was a nice activity for me too (F5)."*

According to the interview data, the social studies teacher found that the voluntary family participation activity "provided an opportunity to get to know the families" and saw that "family support is important in social activities". The social studies teacher had the following to say about the activity:

"The support and contribution of families is very important. Family participation in these social activities is important. I saw ... (the student's) mother, and was surprised. The student has some problems, and his mother had never come (to school). We had spoken on the phone a number of times. Families are more likely to show up when we invite them to such activities rather than just to talk about their children. If you have something to say about their children, on the other hand, the family does not show up because they are afraid. They assume that it will be something negative. Because this was a positive thing, the families enjoyed being with their children."

Family Members Assuming the Role of Instructors

An activity in which family members assumed the role of instructors within the framework of home learning was designed as the fifth activity in the implementation phase. In this home activity, family members shared their knowledge and experiences about an issue of daily life that had been covered in class with their children. This activity was conducted within the framework of the learning outcome "Explaining the effects of climate in the region on human activities, with examples from daily life," as defined in the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005. This learning outcome is part of the topic "The climate and human life." The families were asked to talk with children about how the climate in the region reflected on their daily lives, using examples.

Instructions for the families and students were prepared for this activity. The instructions first explained the purpose of the activity. The family instructions included a list of topics to be covered by the family members when talking with their children during the activity. These instructions were meant to provide guidance to family members regarding the climate of the region. The instructions for the students included a list of questions to be asked to the family member assuming the role of instructor.

According to data from the interviews and student anecdote notebooks, the students found that the activity “helped me retain what was learned”, “provided an opportunity to repeat the learning” and “was nice, fun and exciting”. The students “learned new things”, “had a fun time with my family”, “felt like I was at school”, “learned about the childhood of my family members” and “experienced problems in recording and sending video clips”. One of the students wrote in the anecdote notebook that she had learned about her mother's childhood and was excited during the activity in which family members assumed the role of instructors: *“My mom and I were excited. Mom wrote a speech for herself and read it out loud for the video. I was very excited. Eskişehir had a continental climate. The roads used to freeze over when my mom was a kid. She had a lot of trouble getting to school. Summers, on the other hand, were hot and dry (S14).”* Another student reported in the interview that she spent time with her family and felt happy during the activity: *“I learned about climate change, got to engage in an activity with my family during which I learned about their childhood. I repeated what I had learned. Accordingly, I was very happy to have done this with my family. Sometimes we can't do things because my dad has stuff to do, but it was more fun and enjoyable when we did it together (S13).”*

According to the data garnered from the family cooperation notebooks, the family members reported that the activity in which family members assumed the role of instructors “provided an opportunity for children to do homework with their dads”, “contributed to sharing within the family”, “refreshed their knowledge”, “was made easy thanks to the activity instructions” and “was useful, fun and nice,” but that they were “unable to spend enough time on such activities because of work”. One family member reported that the activity created an environment for sharing within the family, and that the family members had enjoyed their time together during the activity:

“We really enjoyed this activity. I have to admit that this was the first time she spent so much time with her father. Until now, I was the only one dealing with school matters. Her father spends most of his time at work, and he comes home exhausted. I was the one who took care of her. But now, we are really enjoying this process. We are spending time together. Knowledge we have long forgotten is being refreshed. We have refreshed our knowledge of Eskişehir's climate (F14).”

According to the interview data, the social studies teacher reported that the activity in which family members assumed the role of instructors “acquainted me with the social studies course”, and that “families have a negative attitude toward activities because they are concerned about grades”. The social studies teacher expressed her views as follows: *“They might say ‘So, this is the social studies course,’ and get to know the course. It is a good thing, yes, family members participate and learn about stuff, but they are ultimately concerned about grades. They wouldn't think ‘Good, we have made the class more fun and applicable to real life.’”*

Game-based Learning with Family Involvement: Advanced Puzzle of Turkey's Provinces

The game-based learning activity with family involvement was designed as the sixth activity in the implementation phase, allowing the students to learn and have fun at home with their families. The activity aimed to enable students to associate the population distribution of our country with its geographical features. Within this home activity, the families played an educational game with the children that was designed to support the topic covered in class. The activity was conducted within the framework of the learning outcome “Associating areas of high population density in the region with its geographical features,” and the topic “Human settlements” of the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005.

Instructions for the families and students were prepared for activity that provided information on how to access the website to be used in the activity, and how to play the educational game. The

family instructions also explained that it would be difficult for students to learn about the locations and features of the provinces within the limited class hours, and that they could learn about this topic in a fun way using an activity involving all family members.

According to the interview data and the student anecdote notebooks, the students found the activity to be “fun and instructive”, “helped me retain knowledge, as the game was played with family members”, “helped me to spend quality time with my family” and “corrected my mistakes”. They stated that they “would like to play this game in my free time”. One of the students has wrote following in the anecdote notebook regarding the activity: *“We did the homework together as a family. It was a children’s puzzle named TBMM Çocuk. I learned about the locations of Turkey’s provinces and I played the other games. It was a nice homework. Now I know where the provinces are. I enjoyed spending time with my family (S4).”* Another student reported in the interview that the activity helped her retain knowledge, as it was fun and was conducted with family members:

“It’s a very nice activity as it lets you have fun and adds to your knowledge. If I did it alone, no one would be able to help me, and I would solve it by trial and error and learn by myself. If I read it silently, I would not be able to remember that information. But I read it out loud. My mom read. My dad read. Now I will remember it better (S2).”

In the family cooperation notebooks the family members reported that the game-based learning activity with family involvement “allowed me to learn together with my child”, “was a fun and instructive activity”, “taught them about the provinces”, “allowed my son to share responsibility with his siblings” and “reinforced my child’s knowledge of geography”. One of the family members said that their son had conducted the activity with his siblings, and so shared responsibility with them: *“I was taken by surprise in the room this week. I found the three siblings in front of the open computer doing the activity on the relevant website. It is almost impossible to see them getting along so well. My son shared his responsibility with his siblings, and I joined the activity too. It was quite fun. I am sure they will remember some of this stuff (F15).”*

The social studies teacher reported in her interview that the game-based learning activity with family involvement “contained a simple and accessible game”. She thought “the families would enjoy the game,” and she, too, “would like to play the game with my son”. The social studies teacher had the following to say about the activity: *“It is done using technology, which is better. Some things need to be simple. The games they play are too complicated. This is much simpler and something they would enjoy doing, and I am sure the families will enjoy it too. I will also play the game with my son. I liked it a lot. It’s dean, it’s simple, and it’s easily accessible, which is nice.”*

Family-Student Presentation

The seventh activity in the implementation phase involved an in-class family-student presentation. For this activity, a parent and a child made a presentation to the class within the framework of the learning outcome “Produces evidence of how people in the region changed and utilized the natural environment,” and the topic “Where people live” of the 5th grade Social Studies Curriculum for 2005.

When designing this activity, first, a learning outcome was identified that covered topics experienced by families in their daily lives of which families would have knowledge. This learning outcome is about how people change and make use of the natural environment. The parent that would be making the presentation was contacted prior to the activity and was informed about the learning outcome. The parents and the student who were to participate in the activity prepared notes about the learning outcome, and shared them with the researcher who was conducting the activities. The researcher provided feedback to the parent and the student about the notes they had prepared, and helped them prepare the presentation they would make in class.

According to the data garnered from interviews and the student anecdote notebooks, the students found “it interesting for a different adult to conduct the lesson”, and said “I would like to conduct a similar activity with my mother”, “they learned new things”, “it was a pleasant and fun

session", "the activity made me excited and happy", "it was a very nice feeling, having the lesson conducted by a mother", "I thought my friends learned the topic better", "I comprehended the topic better when studied beforehand" and "I would like to do similar activities in all classes". The student who made the presentation with her parent wrote the following in the anecdote notebook regarding the activity:

"Today, my mom and I conducted the class. I was extremely excited when I talked about these things. I kept wondering 'Can I do this? Can I succeed?' However, when the lesson started, I calmed down and started to feel more relaxed. I think my friends now understand this topic better. I am sure that they will be more respectful toward nature, and will always remember some of these things (S2)."

Another student reported in the interview that she had learned new things, and thought it had been very interesting for a different adult to conduct the lesson: *"It was useful because it taught us how to respect the environment. We learned new things. Airports, dams ... I didn't know their definitions very well, I learned about them. I was excited. I think it was really nice. It is interesting when a different adult conducts the lesson (S6)."*

In the interview and the family cooperation notebook, the parent who had participated in the family-student presentation activity said, "It was really fun and nice to make a presentation with her daughter", "these activities refreshed some of her knowledge," "the activity made her excited and happy", "family involvement activities are now enjoyed by everyone," "these activities gave me the - opportunity to see the class and the school" and "the children's participation during the activity made the session run smoothly". A comment made by the parent during the interview regarding the activity is reproduced below:

"At first, I was very excited, but then I felt happy as many students were participating. Sometimes we forget to respect nature. Such activities are helpful for all of us to remind the things that we forgot. I have benefited from the activity. ... It was even better that I did it with my daughter. It was very fun. When they saw me at school, the other parents asked me what I was going to do. I told my acquaintances, and apparently the children told their mothers. All family members are now used to home activities. They do it not because they have to, or to show off, but because it feels right and they enjoy the activities. If no one else is interested, the siblings do them among themselves. We don't really know much about the classes because it is the middle school. I get to spend time with them thanks to these activities (F2)."

According to the data garnered from the interview, the social studies teacher reported that the family-student presentation activity was "a nice and doable activity" during which "the students listened to the parent as if she were an expert", noting that "informed parents think that they can conduct the activity" and that "families should accompany their children during their education". The social studies teacher had the following to say about the activity:

"This activity can be used, and families are also enthusiastic. The children did well. They spoke as if they were experts, they asked good questions and they were not confused. I think it went very well, I was very satisfied with that. No, this was a well-informed parent. Not every parent can do that. They need to volunteer, to be curious and to be willing to conduct some research. Parents accompanying their children – this is what we need in education."

Learning at School with Family Involvement

Learning at school with family involvement was the eighth activity in the implementation phase, in which it was intended for family members and students to learn together at school. For this activity, family members assumed the role of learners together with their children, listened to the lecture in class and created posters on the topic. The activity was conducted within the framework of the learning outcomes "Associating disasters in the region with the region's geographical features" and "Noticing human activities in the region that exacerbate the damage from natural disasters," and the topic "Humans shaping nature" of the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005.

As a first step, a letter was sent to the families containing information about the activity in which family members would assume the role of learners at school with children. The letter contained information about the purpose, the plan, the venue and the timing of the activity, which was planned to be carried out over two class hours. In the first hour of the activity, an informative presentation was made about natural disasters in the conference hall, attended by 18 family members and students. Following the presentation, family-student groups were created that also included students whose family members did not attend the event. In the second hour of the activity, the family-student groups prepared posters about what needed to be done to minimize damage from natural disasters. After the posters were created, the family-student groups were asked to exchange posters, to take them to their homes and to discuss the contents of the posters with other family members at home.

According to data from the interviews and the student anecdote notebooks, the students reported that they had “learned new things”, “cooperated”, “understood the topic better”, “met with my mothers’ friends”, were “happy to spend time with my family” and were “happy and excited” by the activity, stating “my family learned new things”. One of the students wrote in the anecdote notebook that she was happy to listen to the lecture with her mother, saying they felt like friends: *“It was very nice. I felt like my mom was a friend of mine because she listened to the lecture with us and participated in the poster activity. I feel happy when I spend time with my mom (S6).”* Another student reported in the interview that the activity helped him understand the topic better and made the class fun: *“It helped me understand the topic better. We were happy and having fun during class because the activity was very good. I felt very happy. Sitting with my mom at the same desk made me happy and I had fun (S9).”*

According to data garnered from the family cooperation notebooks, the family members reported that the learning at school activity in which they had participated had “allowed families to see the class environment”, had “helped them remember topics they had forgotten about”, had “reinforced our children’s learning,” had “helped us spend quality time with our children” and was “fun and useful”. One of the family members stated in the family cooperation notebook that the activity given them the opportunity to see the class environment and that they had had fun: *“The activity was very nice. I had a lot of fun preparing posters with the children. I had a really good time. I think it was a different and fun activity for children too. This activity was conducted in school during class hours. I think it allowed us to see the classroom environment and made the class more productive (F5).”*

According to data from the interview, the social studies teacher reported that the activity of learning at school with family participation “helped students develop awareness”, but noted that “some families acted shy”, that “the students and family members cooperated,” and that “it was a nice activity”. The social studies teacher had the following to say about learning through a school activity with family involvement: *“They all gained awareness during the poster activity. They worked with their hands. We had children drawing pictures on the one hand, and, moms coloring the pictures on the other. They worked together, it was all very nice.”*

Working with Family Elders

An activity to be conducted with the family elders at home was designed as the ninth activity in the implementation phase. Within this activity, students were to make oral history discussion with family elders on the topic covered in class. The activity was conducted within the framework of the learning outcomes “Associates disasters in the region with the geographical features of the region,” and “Notifies human activities in the region that exacerbate damage from natural disasters,” and the topic “Humans shaping nature” of the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005.

Instructions for the family and students were prepared for the activity, both of which explained the purpose and the subject of the activity. In addition, the researcher conducting the activities carried out an oral history interview with one of her own family members, and presented the video recording of this interview in class. This oral history interview conducted by the researcher with her family member was screened in class using the smartboard. The students were asked to conduct oral history interviews with family elders at home on the topic of natural disasters, using the video they had watched as a template.

According to data from the interviews and student anecdote notebooks, the students reported “feeling as if I had actually witnessed the events described by my grandfather”, “doing homework with the family elders was beneficial in terms of learning about the past”, “learning about new things”, their “grandfather being excited about teaching a topic” and “feeling excited, happy and glad to be spending time with my grandfather”. One of the students wrote in the anecdote notebook that she had been impressed by what her grandfather told her about the topic: *“Conducting an oral history interview with my grandpa was a great feeling. I felt very happy. I felt as if I actually saw the earthquake my grandfather told me about (S14).”* Another student had the following to say about the activity during the interview: *“I didn’t know about the ‘56 earthquake. I learned from my grandpa who was a kid back then. I felt like I was actually seeing for myself the earthquake my grandfather described to me. When we conduct such activities at home, home feels like school but I learn in my own home (S1).”*

According to data from family cooperation notebooks, the family elders reported “it was a nice feeling, spending time with my grandchild”, “I felt honored and proud to be doing homework with my grandchild”, “the kids learned new things from their family members”, the “grandparents were excited talk to their grandchildren” and “the activity produced a nice environment for chat.” One family member wrote in the family cooperation notebook that he had found the activity to be useful, and was excited when taking part: *“I was very excited to talk with my granddaughter like this. I felt as if I was reliving the natural disasters. It was a very nice activity for them to gain a better understanding of this topic. I am always ready to help. The light on her face always makes me happy (F2).”*

According to data garnered from the interview, the social studies teacher reported that the activity of working with family elders “was useful in terms of communicating with family elders and learning about the past”, “listening about events from family elders made them more believable for children” and “having chats with family elders was useful for the social studies course”. The social studies teacher had the following to say about the activity: *“Hearing about the event directly from them makes it more believable. Children already have great faith in their grandfathers. Sometimes my dad also tells me about stuff, about how they used to do things. It’s a different thing for them. They want to learn about past experiences, so, I think speaking with family elders is very useful for social studies.”*

Working with Fathers

The activity of working with fathers was designed as the 10th activity in the implementation phase. Within this activity, students were encouraged to conduct interviews with their fathers on a topic covered in class. The activity was conducted within the framework of the learning outcomes “Recognizes economic activities in one’s place of residence,” and “Evaluates the role played by economic activity in one’s place of residence in the national economy,” and the topic “Economic activities” of the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005.

Instructions for the families and students were created for this activity, which was to be conducted by students with their fathers at home. These instructions explained the purpose of the activity in detail. Prior to class, the researcher conducting the activities met with a family member working in a factory that produces parts for the defense sector, and asked the family member to prepare a video about how this activity contributes to the regional and national economy. This video was shown in class to provide a background for the activity and to encourage the students to conduct the activity.

According to the data garnered from the interviews and from the student anecdote notebooks, the students reported: “I learned new things about my father’s job” “I did not know that factories contributed to the economy”, “I learned about my fathers’ contribution to the economy”, “I felt special because this was the first time I had conducted an activity with my father,” “I saw that I could engage in activities with my father” and “I felt excited and happy to spend time with my father”. One of the students wrote in the anecdote notebook that he had learned new things about his father’s job: *“I was very happy to shoot that video with my father. I learned new things about my father’s job. My father’s contribution to the economy is related to the exports of the items made by the company that they sell to other countries (S9).”* Another student reported in the interview that he felt happy at being able to spend time with his father: *“My dad goes to work. I do my homework either on my own or with my mom. I didn’t know that my dad did all*

those things. For example, what they make is also sold overseas. I thought they sold it in Central Anatolia only. This is what I have learned. We didn't get to spend much time with my dad, but now we do. So I felt very happy (S1)."

According to the data from the family cooperation notebooks, the family members reported that the activity of working with fathers had been "very useful for the kids", "they thought everyone should enjoy doing their jobs" and "it was an informative and fun activity". One of the family members wrote in the family cooperation notebook that the activity was useful and fun: *"The activity I did with my daughter was useful for her. We had a lot of fun in the first videos. In this video, there were only the two of us. We had fun and felt happy (S13)."*

According to the data garnered from the interview, the social studies teacher reported that in activity of working with fathers, "well-informed fathers voluntarily participated in the activity", "some fathers did not want to do the activity" and that the "fathers did not communicate with their children". The following is a direct quote from the interview with the social studies teacher: *"Well informed fathers would volunteer to participate on their own. I am sure there were fathers who did not want to participate. Children keep asking for stuff from their fathers, and with this activity I hope they will realize how difficult and tiring their fathers' jobs are."*

Out-of-school Learning with Family Involvement: The Sugar Factory Trip

The 11th and final activity in the implementation phase was a factory trip as an out-of-school learning activity with family involvement. During this out-of-school activity, the family members supported their children and their teacher. The activity was conducted within the framework of the learning outcomes "Recognizes economic activities in one's place of residence" and "Evaluates the role played by economic activity in one's place of residence in the national economy," and the topic "Economic activities" of the Social Studies Curriculum for 2005.

For this activity, first, the family members who participated in the learning at school activity with family involvement were informed. After obtaining the necessary permission from the factory to be visited for the out-of-school learning activity with family involvement, a travel company was contacted any a suitable date was established for the trip. After finalizing the date of the activity, the required family consent form for the trip was prepared. This family consent form was sent to the families via the students. The families were also informed about the trip using the WhatsApp family communication group, through which the family members confirmed their participation or gave reasons for not participating. The out-of-school learning activity was conducted with the participation of the researcher conducting activity, the social studies teacher, the students and 15 family members.

According to the data garnered from the interviews and the student anecdote notebooks, the students, speaking about the "out-of-school learning activity with family involvement", that "my mother learned new things", "the trip helped me better understand the topic" "the mothers provided support", "the students learned about new things", "I introduced my mother to my best friend's mother", "the trip was better because my mother came along", "we decided to eat less sugar," and "we had fun, and we were excited and happy during the trip." One of the students wrote in the anecdote notebook that she had learned new things: *"We went to the sugar factory today. We saw and learned how sugar is produced in the sugar factory. It was informative. We learned new things. Some parts of the sugar factory smelled foul. I was glad to have taken part in the trip (S3)."* Another student has reported in the interview that the activity had also helped family members learn new things: *"Our moms also learned about new things because they came with us. Our moms also saw what is in sugar, how it is made and the stages of production. These trips strengthened my bond with my family. I told my dad about the stages of production. Dad said he would start using less sugar. I have also decided to eat less sugar (S10)."*

According to the data garnered from the family cooperation notebooks regarding the "out of school learning activity with family involvement," it was reported that "families also benefited from the trip", "they got to mingle with other families and kids", "it was a nice experience for the kids and families" and "the trip was beneficial for the kids". One family member wrote that the activity was

beneficial, in that it gave the students the opportunity to learn about daily life topics through direct observation, and that she found the activity to be fun: *“Kids benefit a lot from trips allow them to observe the real world directly. Talking about the factory setting would not be nearly as effective as seeing it with their own eyes. I think they will be more curious about the production stages of the products we use now. Today, they had an experience that they will remember for years. It was a very fun and informative day for the kids (F3).”*

According to data garnered from the interview regarding the out-of-school learning activity with family involvement, the social studies teacher thought that the “students enjoyed sharing things with their mothers,” “it was a nice trip related to the course”, “the families were happy with the trip”, “the families supported their children's interest in the course”, “the kids were more self-confident with their families around” and “the kids felt safe because their families were with them”. The social studies teacher had the following to say about the activity:

“They (the families) were very glad too. It was a good thing for the families to be with the students in terms of safety. There were at least 15 family members. When everyone took care of their own children, it was easier for us to take care of the rest of the children. The children were happy because they had their families with them. The families seemed glad. The children like to share experiences with their mothers. I also felt safer knowing that their mothers were with them. The trip was very nice. I am glad we made the trip.”

Findings from the Student, Family and Teacher Opinions of the Social Studies Course Conducted with Family Involvement Activities

Once the implementation phase was over, data was collected through interviews with the participants to learn their opinions of the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities and the overall research process. The gathered data is presented in this section organized under four themes:

- Opinions of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course
- Benefits to the participants provided by the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course
- Difficulties experienced during the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course
- Recommendations regarding the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course

Opinions of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course

During the focus group interviews, the family members and students were asked for their opinions on the family involvement activities, and which activities they considered would be useful for family members and students. In contrast, the social studies teacher was asked questions in the interview about the benefits to the families and students brought by the activities, and her opinions on their applicability. An analysis of the data from the interviews resulted in the following findings.

Student views

In the focus group interviews, the students reported that family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course “provided effective instruction”, “made it possible to learn together with our families”, “served as a social activity for families”, “allowed families to support their children”, “provided us with the opportunity to work with our fathers”, “were suitable for verbal courses”, “created an environment of sharing”, “helped complete the lessons in time” and “were useful”.

All of the students reported that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course provided effective instruction, and that these activities “were instructive”, “made learning fun”, “planned the learning and teaching process”, “made it possible to learn how to learn”,

“were motivational”, “were interesting”, “created an environment of cooperation”, “made it possible to repeat their learning” and “allowed practice-based learning”.

Most of the students reported that especially for the home-learning activities, they had made plans together as a family when preparing for the activity, and had chosen the family member that would participate in the activity and the one who would shoot the video. Among the respondents, two students reported that when preparing for the activity in which they would assume the role of teachers, they first tried to memorize the topic, but then they realized that rote memorization would not work, they made an effort learn the topic. These views expressed by the students indicate that the activities helped them learn how to learn. One of the students said that activities conducted with her family facilitated her learning, and helped her comprehend the topic more quickly and to correct her mistakes.

“Then I played the teacher for my family. I tried to memorize the valleys and plains, because I used to mix them up a lot. I wasn’t able to memorize them, and so I tried studying. When I studied, I found that I learned more quickly, and without memorizing. We taught our families something they didn’t know, and with our family we came to understand more quickly things we didn’t know or used to mix up with other stuff. I used to mix up valleys and plains, but after teaching about them to my family, I comprehended more quickly (S10).”

Some students reported that the home learning activities in particular gave them the opportunity to repeat what they had learned in class. For example, one of the students said the following: *“We repeat the lesson with our families. It is fun; you get to learn more stuff, and your family gets to learn things. And this makes you very happy (S6).”*

Students emphasized two aspects of the environment of sharing created by the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course: “Intra-family sharing and “Sharing with other families.” As regards to intra-family sharing, some students reported that the activities created an environment of sharing with their fathers. Some were of the opinion that their fathers spent limited time with them due to pressures of work, and the activities helped create an environment of sharing among family members. One of the students had the following to say about this topic: *“My dad did not have much time for me. He comes home at night, goes to sleep early because he has to get up early in the morning for work, and we didn’t get to spend much time together. We had a chance to spend more time; we had fun together (S13).”* Some of the students reported that this was the first time they engaged in an activity with family elders, and the activities created an environment of sharing among the family members. One of the students had the following to say about sharing time with the family elders: *“I had never sat down and talked with my grandpa about things; this was the first time we talked. He told me about his past for the first time (S9).”*

Most students reported that the family involvement activities of the social studies course helped them learn with their families. In addition, most of the students reported that prior to the family involvement activity, they had never studied or done homework with their fathers, saying that these activities had provided them with a chance to work with their fathers, which made them happy. One of the students said the following: *“But that (the activity of working with fathers) made me even happier, because I had never studied with my father before; it was always my mom who helped me with stuff I didn’t understand (S1).”*

Some students were of the opinion that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course made it possible to complete the lessons in a timely manner. The students stated that before the activities started, they were falling back on the lessons in the social studies course, but that their performance in class had improved thanks to the family involvement activities, and they caught up with the other classes. One of the students had the following to say about this issue: *“We were never able to complete the lessons on time. I think there was a great improvement in class too. We are not that far behind in the lessons now, but we are not ahead either; we are where we are supposed to be. We are now covering economic activities, the fourth chapter. Right now, we are studying agriculture, and learning about the factors that contribute to the national economy (S9).”*

Family views

According to the data garnered during the focus group interviews, the family members reported that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course “provided effective instruction”, “created an environment of sharing”, “were suitable for the age group of the students”, “served as a social activity for families”, “gave families a chance to see their children’s level of learning”, “provided a chance to work with fathers”, “were conducted with guidance from the teacher” and “were useful”.

Some family members stated the opinion that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course provided effective instruction, reporting that the activities “were able to attract the attention of the students”, “motivated the students”, “were instructive for the students”, “created a setting for cooperation” and “made learning fun”.

Some family members were of the opinion that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course grabbed the attention of their children and motivated them in class. They said that their children were more willing to attend the class following the family involvement activities. One family member described the change in her daughter’s attitude toward the social studies course as follows: *“This year, the social studies course is even better. She started to sit down on her own and conduct research. She started saying ‘Let’s do this, Mom. We should do that, Mom. Mom, Dad, this won’t work, let’s shoot another video’ (F14).”* Another family member made the following observation: *“He couldn’t wait to go because they would do a different activity, or he would bring the activity home and say ‘Mom, we are supposed to do this. When can we do it?’ He was interested, in short (F11).”*

The family members emphasized that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course “created an environment of sharing”, and explained that the types of sharing facilitated by the activities were “intra-family sharing”, “sharing with the teacher” and “sharing with other families”.

On the issue of intra-family sharing, the family members said that they had had fun together as a family, as they had been able to share their past experiences with their children, while their children shared what they had learned in class with them. They said that the activities had served as leisure activities for the family, and that the children had come to learn about other family members better as a result. One family member said that her son's perception of her had changed due to the information she shared during the activities: *“He said, ‘Mom, you knew something after all.’ Children see us as housewives, people who do the dishes and housework all the time. They think we don’t know anything, and when we answer questions, they like it. They start asking more questions. They try to learn more (F4).”*

Some families reported that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course created an environment of sharing with the teacher, which gave them the chance to get to know the teacher better. One of the family members gave the following example:

“We would probably see Ms. Özden only at meetings. Now we can talk more comfortably. We had something like that, in fact. My son marked his answers in the wrong places and got a score of 70. I talked to his teacher, and she said she would fix it. We later checked, and she hadn’t fixed it. I had to write (a message) to her, ‘Madame, you had said so and so.’ Normally I wouldn’t feel comfortable writing that, but because we spent time together, we had got to know each other (F9).”

Some of the family views that were expressed indicated that family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course allowed the family members to understand their children's level of learning. *“She (the student) is in fact better than us. She is even better in shooting these videos (F8)”*, observed one family member, whereas another, speaking about her son’s performance in the learning activity at school with family involvement, said, *“I saw that he was not that talented when it comes to drawings (F15).”*

All of the family members who participated in the focus group interviews were the mothers of the students. According to an analysis of data garnered from the focus group interviews, the family

members' opinions of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course were positive, particularly because they provided an opportunity for the children to work with their fathers. Some family members reported that the fathers were previously not interested in their children's lessons and homework, whereas others reported that their spouses were not able to spend time with their kids or help with their homework due to long working hours. One family member had the following to say about this issue: *"I was very happy, because previously, when my husband came home, he would turn on the television, turn on the news, and say 'Please be quiet, let me listen to this.' This was what he used to do (F6)."*

One of the family members said that families needed guidance for the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course: *"Someone has to tell us to do it. Only then can we spare the time, otherwise everyone is doing their own thing (F1)."*

Teacher's views

In an analysis of the data garnered from the interview, the social studies teacher reported that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course had "helped families support their children and the teacher" and "provided a chance to work with fathers", while "some activities were considered to be time-consuming for teachers", although "all activities were applicable" and "the teacher needed to provide guidance".

The social studies teacher was of the opinion that the family involvement activities had allowed families to support their children, and that in addition to supporting their children, the family members also supported the teacher, especially the non-working family members: *"If they were working, not so much, but the housewives provided a lot of support. They also supported their children."*

The social studies teacher was of the opinion that teachers should provide guidance for the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course. To elaborate, the social studies teacher gave the example of the game-based learning activity with family involvement: *"The attitude towards the child should not be 'You have to learn this,' but should instead be 'You are playing a game.' The child will learn anyway while they play. Right now, for example, in game-based learning you have to make a research to find out about it, you have to be specialized in it and adopt it, or future teachers should be trained in it."*

The social studies teacher said that she found all activities to be applicable: *"All of the activities were applicable; there were no problems at all."* The social studies teacher also said that the students would be better able to understand a topic in verbal courses if they were to pass on what they had learned to someone else, stating that the activity in which the students assumed the role of teacher had been very useful: *"The best thing to do at home, with these verbal courses, is to act as the teacher. When you teach it to someone else, you reinforce your learning. So, because this is a mandatory course, and we have an activity involving moms and dads, the kids like it even more when you say moms and dads have to participate."*

Benefits provided to participants by the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course

In the focus group interviews, the family members and students were asked questions about how the family involvement activities had been reflected in their daily lives and in the family relationships, and what benefits they had provided. In the interview conducted with the social studies teacher, she was asked questions about the benefits the activities provided to families, to students and to the teacher. The findings of the analysis of the data garnered from the interviews are presented below.

Student views

In the analysis of data from the focus group interviews it was noted that the students, when asked about the benefits of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, said that the activities "provided benefits to students", "provided benefits to families", "provided benefits to the teacher" and "strengthened relationships."

Benefits to students

The students reported that the benefits to students provided by the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course included "the acquisition of knowledge and skills", "the

raising of awareness”, “the retention of learning”, “the application of learning to daily life”, “the correcting of misconceptions” and “the correcting of mislearning”.

From the students comments, it was understood that most students had had the opportunity to use what they had learned in the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities in their daily lives, with special emphasis on the awareness of the natural environment, conscious consumption and being saving-conscious. Many students reported that following the family-student presentation activity, they became more aware of the natural environment, they avoided littering, they collected litter and they confronted people who dropped litter. One of the students had the following to say about the issue: *“I used to litter a lot when I was little, and while I learned about it as I grew up, I still littered occasionally. Then I stopped doing that, and started confronting people who dropped litter (S10).”* Another student said the following: *“When I go home after class, there is usually a lot of litter in front of our house. There are trees front of our house, and there is a lot of litter. I collected them and put them in the garbage bin (S4).”*

Some students reported that during the factory trip, which was the out-of-school learning activity with family involvement, they saw how difficult it was to produce sugar, and decided to use less sugar. One student said, *“I have decided to use it very carefully, and to pick up even the smallest sugar spills (S1).”*

Many students reported that following the activity conducted during the domestic goods week, they gained an awareness of domestic goods and how to choose which products to consume. One student had the following to say about the issue:

“I think we learned most about becoming well-informed consumers. For example, I learned how we should buy food from the supermarket, how to check the TSE stamp and the best before date. That very night, we went to the supermarket. I checked if they were Turkish products, and I checked the “best before” dates of everything. This was how we shopped. My family congratulated me, they said ‘Good work’. (S13)”

Some students said that they knew their fathers went to work, but that they didn't think of this as contributing to the country and the national economy. They realized after the activity conducted with their father that every occupation contributed to the country in different ways. One student said she gained an awareness of different professions, and said that she could use some of what she had learned in the social studies course in her own life, giving a profession as an example: *“I, for example, will use what I've learned when I become an agricultural engineer. What I learned in class will affect my life. What to grow, how the erosion carries soil away, what to plant in different places, I can use stuff like this (S6).”*

Two of the students reported that, thanks to the family involvement activities, they had righted some misconceptions that they held. One of the students reported that during the home learning activity with family involvement in which family members assumed the role of instructors, she and her mother realized they were wrong about the materials used in the construction of houses, which was part of the topic of climate. *“We learned about the continental climate. We were talking with my mom, and my mom said wooden houses were more common in the Mediterranean region, but I insisted that they were not. It turned out we were both wrong. Both my mom and I corrected our misconceptions (S10).”*

Some of the student views expressed indicated that the activities led them to research particular subjects. One of the students had the following to say about how the activities encouraged him to conduct research: *“I used to be a little withdrawn with homework. I used to do it on my own, but now I am asking more questions. We were assigned homework for the social studies course, and I first asked my family, and then conducted research on the Internet to get detailed information (S1).”*

Benefits to families

The students reported that benefits to families provided by the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course included “family members gaining knowledge”, “family

members gaining experience", "family members improving their self-confidence" and "family members becoming conscious consumers".

The students whose mothers participated in the activity conducted during the domestic goods week reported that following the activity, their mothers had gained an awareness of the benefits of consuming domestic goods. One student had the following to say about the issue: *"We didn't pay much attention in the past, but now we pay more attention. Our mothers now pay more attention to checking whether or not it is a domestic product (S8)."*

Some students reported that the activities had helped improve their mothers' self-confidence. One student said the following: *"They learned many things too, and they refreshed their knowledge as they talked about it; so I think they may have gained a little more self-confidence (S2)."*

Benefits to the teacher

The students said that family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course benefited the social studies teacher by "contributing to her professional development". Two students reported that there were differences in the way social studies teacher approached students after the research process. One of the students reported that the social studies teacher had been influenced by the researcher conducting the activities: *"Before you came, everyone was afraid of Ms. Özden; but now, Ms. Özden is friendlier. For example, she went easy on some people who had not done their homework, and gave them another chance. She goes easy on us (S6)."*

Strengthening relationships

Some of the students thought that one of the benefits of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course was "strengthening intra-family relationships", being of the opinion that the activities helped strengthen family ties. One of the students had the following to say about the issue:

"They started to take better care of us. For example, when I woke up in the morning I used to say good morning and kiss them. It was normal, but now she has started to wake me up herself, and kiss me. My mom wakes up early on Sunday mornings, and prepares breakfast. I used to wake up and just watch television. Now I go up to my dad as soon as I wake up. I kiss him and he kisses me (S6)."

Family views

In the analysis of the data garnered from the focus group interviews, it was noted that family members, regarding the benefits provided by family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, found that the activities "provided benefits to students", "provided benefits to families" and "strengthened relationships."

Benefits to students

The family members reported that the benefits to students provided by family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course included "the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values", "gaining awareness", "applying learning to daily life" and "retaining learning".

Many family members noted that the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities provided benefits to students in terms of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values. All family members reported that the students acquired detailed knowledge of various fields during the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities. Most family members were of the opinion that following the family involvement activities, the research skills of students improved. One family member said that following the social studies course, her son started conducting research: *"Because we showered him with affection, he always had it easy since early childhood. Whenever he was stuck with something, he would ask, 'Mom what is this?' I would answer him and he would write it down. He did not make his own research at all. Now he has started researching things for himself thanks to the social studies course. Now, he says, 'Let me look it up on the Internet'. (F4)"*

Most family members noted that through the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, the students gained self-confidence. An analysis of the opinions of the family members shows that they attributed the improvement in the self-confidence of the students to the student-centered nature of the family involvement activities. One family member, speaking about her daughter's improved self-confidence following the activity in which students assumed the role of teachers, said: *"Their self-confidence has improved. They realize that they too are individuals, that they can talk about stuff and that other people at home will listen. She has started to make comparisons. It is nice ... Being assigned a task and completing that task made her happy (F6)."*

Many family members were of the opinion that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course improved the students' sense of responsibility. The family members noted that especially during home-learning activities, the students assumed responsibility, informed family members about the activity and tried to get the activity done on time. One family member had the following to say about this issue: *"The research also contributed a great deal. Now he takes responsibility. He is very interested in research. As soon as he comes home, he is like 'I am supposed to do this. My teacher gave me this assignment, I will need to research that.' He comes and does it on his own. He takes more responsibility (F7)."*

Many of the family members thought that the students had started using what they had learned in the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course in their daily lives. The family members reported that the family involvement activities had provided the students with an environmental awareness and an understanding of the importance of saving, turning them into conscious consumers. Some family members reported that following the family-student presentation activity, the students became more aware of the natural environment and had started to collect recyclable materials. Some family members, on the other hand, reported that following the voluntary family participation activity in the domestic goods week, and the factory trip conducted as an out-of-school learning activity with family involvement, the students had started to save their pocket money, to distinguish between their needs and desires, to turn off unnecessary lights, and to develop an awareness of their sugar consumption and the consumption of domestic products. One family member had the following to say on the issue: *"When we go to the kitchen to eat ... (the student) comes after turning off the television and the lights. I say 'Son, the house is too dark; what if someone comes to visit us?' 'Let them ring the bell, Mom,' he says (F9)."* Another family member explained that following the activity conducted during the domestic goods week, her daughter had started to distinguish between her needs and desires:

"During this domestic goods thing, my daughter learned about whether something is a need or desire when we go shopping. She used to want to buy things even if she didn't need them. When we went shopping for other needs, for example, we couldn't wear them unless we bought one for her too. So she used to get one. Now that is over. 'Mom, you need it, go ahead and buy,' she says. 'Mine is only a desire.' (F6)."

Benefits to families

Family members reported that benefits provided by the activities to the family members included "acquiring knowledge", "becoming conscious consumers", "improving research skills", "improving self-confidence", "empathizing with the teacher" and "correcting misconceptions".

All families reported that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course had led them to acquire new knowledge and to remember things they had learned in the past. An analysis of family members' views indicated that the family involvement activities had provided knowledge and experience to parents, and had provided the siblings of the students with various information. *"We learn new things, and get to hear about things we didn't know. Of course it is useful to us too (F7),"* said one family member, whereas another said she attended open high school, and was able to answer the questions in her exam thanks to the knowledge she acquired during the activities: *"I have benefited a lot. I am currently attending the open high school. I benefited from the social studies course, and was able to pass my exams. I don't think I could have passed them otherwise because I did not studying or anything. They even asked about climates in the exam, I was able to answer those questions (F12)."*

Some family members reported that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course had improved their general knowledge. One of the family members gave the following example: *“We learned about the locations of cities. General knowledge is very important. For example, I had no idea about Kırıkkale. We learned well in what region cities re located, whether they are in the east or in the west, etc. Also, when you select cities, important information appears below them. We learned about these. This is general knowledge, it could be useful everywhere. It was nice. I really enjoyed that game (F8).”*

Some family members reported that the family involvement activities in the social studies course had encouraged them to conduct research. One family member had the following to say on this issue:

“Start spending more time with the kids and research books. For example, for your course, she would come and say ‘Mom we are supposed to do this.’ We researched the topic and did the activity. In other courses, for example the Turkish course, we did not do any research, I didn’t even look at them. On another day, there was a dictionary, and we would look things up. We started doing it together. He asked me things; I asked him things. This is how it went (F9).”

An analysis of the opinions of the family members revealed that some of them, especially during the activity in which they played the teacher, empathized with the teacher. They reported that during the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, they realized that teaching is a difficult profession, as teachers have to keep reading and researching all the time. One family member described a change in the views of her spouse, who used to think that the education of their children was the sole responsibility of the teacher: *“My husband would sometimes say, ‘If we do this, what are the teachers supposed to do? If I help with her homework, what is the teacher supposed to do?’ This is what he used to think, but he doesn’t think like that anymore. Now I see him checking up on our son and asking ‘What is going on with your classes? Is there anything we can do to help?’ (F2)”*

Some of the family members reported that they had acquired new knowledge thanks to the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, and that this had improved their self-confidence. One such family member said the following:

“In the social studies course, I will try to explain my daughter that what climates or landforms are and this will keep my knowledge fresh for at least next five years without researching, ‘Sweetie, I think it is like this, I think it was like that.’ We will have a first grader again, I have a young daughter. For example, during the primary school years of ... (the student), I used to look things up on the Internet all the time, because it had been a long time since I learned this stuff. Now I feel better, and I will feel like a teacher with my little daughter. For the next year, everyone is worried, asking ‘What are we going to do next year?’ I say we will be just fine. I have self-confidence now, thank God. I believe the next year and the year after that will be very easy with my younger daughter (F12).”

Some of the family members reported that following the activity conducted in the domestic goods week, their children had started to take care to consume domestic goods. One family member gave the following example, explaining how she gained an awareness of the benefits of consuming domestic products after participating in the activity conducted during domestic goods week:

“We do not use Turkish products. That is what I realized back then. We go to the supermarket, and we are used to buying certain brands thinking that they are better. We do not check whether they are Turkish. For example, we used to like one particular chocolate brand ... and wouldn’t eat any other chocolate. But it is not a Turkish product. Then I said ‘Let’s try a Turkish product, and if you don’t like it, we will go back to buying the same thing.’ But we loved it ... We have been buying ... instead of ... ever since. Shampoos, and other products we use ... We now check whether they are Turkish products. We did not have that awareness before (F8).”

Strengthening relationships

The family members reported that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course strengthened “intra-family relationships” and “relationships between the families, students and teachers.”

Some of the family members reported that after participating in the activities conducted in the social studies course they had come to realize the importance of communicating with their children, and as a result, their relations with their children have strengthened. Regarding the benefits to family relationships, one family member had the following to say: *“Our relationship with our son has been strengthened. We did take care of him before, but now that we are better informed, we do it better. I used to think that he would grow distant from us in middle school, but our ties have strengthened instead (F4).”*

Many family members reported that during the implementation of the family involvement activities they had met the social studies teacher, other students and other families for the first time, and that getting to know the social studies teacher, other students and other families had been beneficial. Regarding the strengthening of ties with other families, one family member had the following to say:

“I think it happened over a short period time. I didn’t know the other parents. My son has only one or two friends, and I only knew one of their mothers. The trip was very nice. We made videos. We got to know each other better, and now we can ask questions via WhatsApp without hesitating. We were unable to send messages. I couldn’t write to ask things, I used to feel shy (F1).”

One family member had the following to say about how the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course strengthened the relationship between the teacher and families:

“In general terms, the communication between the teacher and the student, the family and the teacher, the student and the family ... We all started to communicate. Without this, we would probably communicate with the class teacher only at meetings. I think this is a privilege. We don’t talk face to face with the teacher unless we have to, and the teacher does not want to deal with all these families. As a result, the families do not knock on the teacher’s door unless there is a problem. although we got to know the teacher better thanks to these activities (F2).”

Teacher’s views

In the analysis of the data garnered from the interview, it was found that the social studies teacher, speaking about the benefits provided by family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, had reported that the activities “provided benefits to students”, “provided benefits to families”, “provided benefits to the teacher” and “strengthened relationships”.

The social studies teacher was of the opinion that the most concrete indicator of the benefit provided to the students by the family involvement activities conducted in social studies course was the increase in their academic achievement. The social studies teacher thought that thanks to the activities, the students had got to know each other better and an environment of trust had developed in class. Furthermore, the students started to apply what they had learned in the social studies course in their other courses. The social studies teacher noted that the class with which the activities were conducted was not the most academically successful class at the beginning of the semester, but by the end of the semester, it was:

“The class is very successful. Their sense of unity and oneness contributed to the success of the class. What happened when the families got involved, when the mothers got to know each other? They started giving more support to their children, and now we are reaping the fruits of that at the end of the first semester. There is not one student in this class who did not earn a certificate of merit. The principal told me that this was the most successful 5th grade class. I felt proud. Even though I didn’t contribute much, I felt proud. We brought them together with this study. They applied what they learned here in other courses – both the families and the children – I believe. This is what is behind the success. Being together increased their confidence. The fact

that they not only got to know their families better, but that the families also got to know each other made the class more confident, I believe."

The social studies teacher thought that the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course provided family members with both knowledge and experience. Giving the example of the family-student presentation activity, the social studies teacher noted that the family members not only gained experience, but also started to empathize with the teacher:

"It was a nice activity (the family-student presentation activity). They studied beforehand, they came prepared. The family members must have realized how difficult teaching is, and how it is not as easy as it may look from the outside. It was quite difficult through; there were difficult questions. You just have to think on your feet, make a decision and respond. You cannot just say "I don't know." You came all the way here, you have studied, you have prepared. So they must have had that anxiety, of course, the anxiety of having to teach something to someone."

The social studies teacher reported that she had also benefited in various ways from the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course. She reported that she had made observations throughout the process, and the activities had been instructive for her: *"I was curious about these things anyway, I was always willing, I always had a desire to participate in such a study, but how? You can want something, but it is difficult. Now that you are here, I only made observations, but it was more fun for me to observe. I also got to learn things."*

The social studies teacher said that the study had raised her awareness of family involvement activities, and had allowed her to see the benefits of conducting the social studies course with family involvement in a short period of time. The social studies teacher reported that during the implementation phase of the study she had conducted similar activities with other classes as well: *"I told the other classes about TBMM Çocuk (a puzzle game). They all played it – the other classes ... The kids apparently liked it."* She also gave an example of how she had acted on the observations made during the study, once the implementation phase was over, and how she had gained awareness of how to achieve family involvement in the courses:

"There were nice activities. We have project assignments in the second semester, and a project assignment in the social studies course for growing saplings from acorns. When you showed me these, I realized something. I saw their effects in a short period of time. Let me put it this way. They went to the Provincial Directorate of Forestry and got acorns from them. They conducted interviews. Some of them completed the assignment. I can do it class by class now, and now, we will build a ... Middle School forest. They are doing it with their families, of course, they cannot do it on their own. They will also take pictures there. Project assignments in social studies are either history-oriented or geography-oriented. Then they become idle."

Difficulties experienced during the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course

An analysis of data garnered from the interviews with family members, students and the social studies teacher revealed some difficulties in implementation. The findings on these difficulties are presented below.

Student views

The students reported that during the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course, they experienced difficulties based on "feelings of inadequacy regarding families", "feelings of self-inadequacy", "limitations when shooting videos" and "technical problems".

Some of the students thought that during the implementation of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, their family members would have difficulty in participating in the activities due to their education levels. One student expressed feelings of inadequacy related to the family involvement activities due to the low education level of his family members: *"My dad only studied up to fifth grade and forgot everything; it was so many years ago. I was afraid*

because he only studied up to the fifth grade, thinking 'What am I going to do if he cannot answer them?' but he did everything, I was so happy (S7)."

An analysis of the data from the interviews showed that some of the students had difficulties when shooting the videos of the home learning activities, reporting that they had problems maintaining focus among the family members. Talking about the problems of maintaining focus she encountered, one student said that shooting videos for the home learning activities later became fun: *"Shooting the videos was difficult for us, because we never managed to get it done in one shot. Either my dad laughed, or I did, or my sister would intervene and laugh. All sorts of things happened. It was somewhat of a problem, but I also had fun (S12)."*

Some students reported that they had problem shooting videos due to the features of the smartphone they used, whereas others had technical problems when sending the videos. Speaking about the technical problem they experienced when sending the video for the home learning activity to the researcher, one student said *"We didn't have a problem shooting the video, but my mom had some problem sending the video. We sent it in parts (S12)."*

Family views

The family members reported that during the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course they experienced difficulties in "feelings of the inadequacy students felt regarding their families", "family members' own feelings of inadequacy", "limited participation by fathers", "lack of time on the part of working family members", "limitations when shooting videos" and "technical problems".

Some parents reported that during the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course, their children harbored feelings of inadequacy regarding their parents. One parent had the following to say about this issue: *"He takes responsibility too. He cannot trust me because I don't know much. Also, I am usually busy because I am a housewife. He asks his father or grandfather (F7)."*

Some families felt anxious about their own adequacy when participating in the activities during the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course. One family member said the following: *"We were a little worried about whether or not we could do it, and what sort of a class it would be. We tried to do it regularly. We tried to choose our words carefully when speaking on video (F2)."*

Many family members noted that the participation of the fathers in the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course was limited. Some family members attributed this to the mothers taking more responsibility for the education of their children. One family member said *"Because they had never got involved with the homework, my father was excited, but also had some trouble (F6)."*

Some family members reported that their spouses had difficulty participating in the activities for the social studies course due to their working hours. One family member described the difficulty her husband had because of his working hours when participating in activities and completing the activities that required the participation of the father: *"It was a little difficult for us. As he worked shifts, he would either stay for overtime when he was to come home during the day, or my son would be asleep when he came home from work. We sent our dad activities a little late, but he had fun too (F11)."*

Some family members reported, similar to the students, that they had difficulty maintaining the focus of those involved when shooting the videos for the home learning activities with family involvement. One family member had the following to say about the focus problem they had when shooting the videos: *"We couldn't concentrate, everyone kept laughing as we had never had that sort of interaction before. She had never sat down and studied with her father. She may have asked him questions from time to time, and he would answer, but that was it. With this, however, they spent about an hour together, even though it was only a 15-minute video (F2)."*

Some family members reported experiencing technical problems when shooting or sending the videos. One family member described the problem they had sending the video as follows: *"I wasn't able to send some of the videos, I had to send shorter versions. We had trouble sending them (F13)."*

Teacher's views

Based on her observations, the social studies teacher reported that the problems experienced during the implementation of the family involvement activities for the social studies course included "feelings of inadequacy on the part of family members" and the "lack of a social studies classroom".

The social studies teacher was of the opinion that family members had feelings of inadequacy with regards to their participation in the activities, especially in the early stages of the implementation phase. The social studies teacher expressed this as follows: *"The biggest fear on the part of the families was whether they could do it, whether they could pull it off. Once they started, they realized that it was doable. This was their biggest fear: 'What if can't pull it off, what if we are not good enough?'"*

The social studies teacher was of the opinion that a social studies classroom would make it possible to design more varied family involvement activities by provide a working space for the teacher to use during such activities, and creating a warm environment for the activities.

"What else could we do? If, for example, we had a social studies classroom of our own, we could have more activities in that classroom and it would be easier for family members to come and go. We could create a warm environment for social studies ... We would be able to invite family members of that class, sit down and chat over some tea. It would be nice."

Recommendations for the implementation of the family involvement activities in the social studies course

An analysis of data garnered from the interviews revealed some recommendations regarding the implementation of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, and potential family involvement activities that could be conducted in the social studies course. The findings on the recommendations made by the participants are presented below.

Student views

Many of the students reported that they had found the family involvement activities they had conducted in the social studies course to be varied. Regarding other activities for the social studies course that could be conducted with family involvement, some students recommended "activities that contribute to family education", "activities involving research", "family to family social studies education activities" and "family conversation activities".

One student recommended an activity in which the family members and students would be listeners and the teacher would conduct a lesson. The student thought that his classmates would be happy with this activity because their family members would be with them. The student had the following to say about her recommendation: *"I think you should conduct a lesson, and everyone's families should come and listen with us, because when you conduct a lesson, you explain things. I think it would be more beneficial. When our families come, we would have our families with us, and we would be happier, I think (S8)."*

After the student (S8) had made this recommendation, another student in the focus group interview made the following comment: *"It would work, because my mom and dad went to school only up to the fifth grade, so it would be more useful. They only went to primary school, and are primary school graduates. I think it would be useful (S7)."*

Two students recommended a family conversation activity for which students and family members would be together at school. The students argued that through such a family involvement activity in the social studies course, family members, students and the teacher could share their past experiences: *"I think it would be nice if all families came together and we talked about the natural disasters we had seen, and if everyone talked about a significant disaster they saw (S8)."* *"We could talk about our memories. I think this activity would be nice (S7)."*

Two students recommended an activity for the social studies course in which family members would conduct a joint research. The students gave examples based on the topics of the social studies course to expand upon their recommended activity involving joint family research. One family had the following to say about this recommendation: *"Conducting research. For example, what is the relationship*

between Turkey and the Byzantines? Was the name of Sivas changed? What about other provinces? Or, what was our place of residence called in the past? How did it change? (S1)"

One student recommended an activity to be conducted at school in which the family members would assume the role of teachers, and other families would also be invited. The student explained her recommendation as follows: *"I think it would be nice if a family member and a child conducted a lesson, because when a family member conducts the lesson and there are other families present, they would speak in a way moms and dads would understand, while the child would speak in a way the children would understand (S8)."*

Family views

Many families, similar to the students, reported the family involvement activities to be varied. Some family members recommended that "activities based on conducting research", "activities based on current events" and "activities requiring the participation of the fathers" could be conducted as family involvement activities in the social studies course.

Sometime the family members recommended activities in the social studies course requiring the fathers to participate. One family member explained her recommendation of such an activity, demonstrating that they spent time with their children as follows: *"We had a family activity in which we designed posters. It shouldn't be just the mothers involved; there should be something they can look at that day and see that their father devoted this time to them; they should be able to say 'My dad is here, he is attending our class.' (F6)"*

Two families recommended that family involvement activities based on current events could be conducted in the social studies course. One of the family members had the following to say about a family involvement activity related to a current event that students should know about, but that is not included in the contents of the course: *"It could be something current, something the children should know about. You could raise awareness about something other than the course. That could be done (F2)."*

Teacher's views

The social studies teacher also made recommendations regarding the implementation of the family involvement activities to be conducted in the social studies course. The social studies teacher emphasized that family involvement activities should be "conducted on a voluntary basis" and that "due sensitivity should be shown". Social studies teacher said that family members could volunteer to participate at school and during out-of-school activities acquiring family participation. The social studies teacher noted that there could be students whose family members are deceased or divorced, and reminded that due sensitivity should be shown when conducting family involvement activities. The social studies teacher said that she had conducted an activity with fathers in another class, but learned that one student's father was deceased. The social studies teacher shared her experience as follows:

"I conducted an activity similar to this one (a working with fathers activity) in another class. Let's say I was influenced by you, and did this activity. We were discussing the topic of professions at the end of the year, and I thought it would fit nicely with that, combining economic activities and professions. I told them to conduct interviews with their fathers. This was the assignment I gave in a class. Then, someone said 'Miss, my pencil case used to be my dad's when he was a child.' 'Are you sure?' I asked. 'Yes, Miss, my father gave me this,' he said. 'How old is your father?' I asked, and he said 'My father is dead.' Then I had to find a way out, and said that it didn't have to be their fathers, it could be mothers as well, or uncles. These types of assignments are very nice, yes, but you have to be extra careful."

The social studies teacher recommended that other families also participate as listeners in school activities involving a single family. The social studies teacher explained her recommendation as follows: *"You could do this, for example. A couple of other family members could be present in the classroom during the family-student presentation, and the listeners would empathize with their children as someone tells them something, and observe what it is like. Someone else teaches a lesson, and you listen and take notes."*

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

During the implementation phase of this study, which aimed to explore how to achieve family involvement in the social studies course, and to analyze the opinions of students, families, and teachers on the application of the social studies course with family involvement activities, 11 family involvement activities were conducted: five of which were conducted at home, five at school and one outside the school.

The family members and students who participated in the family involvement activities conducted in the school and outside the school for the social studies course reported that they found the activities entertaining and useful and that they felt excited and happy during the activities. This finding of the study is consistent with the findings of other studies in literature on family involvement (Balli et al., 1998; Kılıç, 2010; Van Voorhis, 2011).

The family members and students, when asked about the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, thought that each activity contributed to the family members and students in different ways, and so they found all activities to be useful. This result of the study coincides with the results that the family involvement studies conducted by Atakan (2010) with the families and conducted by Akkaya (2007) with teachers have positive reflections on the students.

Studies in literature note that it is very important for the teacher to provide guidance to, and inform families about, what needs to be done to help with their children's studies (Fitzgerald, 2004; Şeker, 2009). The present study made use of family cooperation notebooks and social media applications to support and communicate with families, especially in home learning activities. Most family members who participated in the study reported that the instructions in the family cooperation notebooks for home activities were useful as they facilitated the understanding and implementation of the activity. It can thus be concluded that family cooperation notebooks are an effective tool for communicating with families and for providing them with instructions related to family involvement activities to be conducted in home for social studies courses.

Another finding was that the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities provided benefits to students, parents and the social studies teacher. Previous studies in literature report that family involvement contributes to academic achievement and the development of self-confidence among students (Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005; Epstein, 2010a; Hornby, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). One finding of the present study was that the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities contributed to the students' academic achievement, and the development of their self-confidence. This finding of the study is consistent with the findings that family involvement contributes to academic achievement of students reported by Barge and Loges (2003), Bellibaş and Gümüş (2013), Fan and Chen (2001), Hill and Tyson (2009), Jeynes (2005), Kılıç (2010), Lawson (2003), Morris and Taylor (1998), Sheldon (2003) and Walhof (2016), and is also consistent with the finding that family involvement contributes to the development of the students' self-confidence, reported by Akkaya (2007), Atakan (2010) and Kılıç (2010).

The social studies teacher, who is a participant in the research, reported that students used what they had learned in the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities also in other courses, making this class the most successful in academic terms than the other fifth grade classes in the school. Some family members, similar to social studies teacher, reported that they had started supporting their children also in other courses. This finding of the study shows that family members and students can make use of what they learn during the family involvement activities in the social studies course also in other courses.

The study has shown that family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course contributed to the development of a sense of responsibility among the students. The family members reported that students took on responsibilities, especially during the family involvement activities

conducted at home for the social studies course. This finding of the study is consistent with that of Kılıç (2010), who found that “Class teachers believed that family involvement activities improved the students’ sense of responsibility.”

The study has shown that students received many additional benefits, besides improved academic achievement, and the development of self-confidence and a sense of responsibility. The activities conducted as part of the study were found to contribute to the development of students’ empathy and research skills, giving them also an awareness of production activities, professions and natural disasters. In addition, the students were found to correct mislearnings and misconceptions in the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities. These findings of the study show that family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course contributed to the students’ development in multiple ways.

Studies in literature report that family involvement activities can make an important contribution to the personal development of family members (Aslanargun, 2007; Hill & Taylor, 2004). The present study found that the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities provided various benefits to family members. The students reported that their family members had acquired knowledge and experience within the family involvement activities in the social studies course, and their siblings had also learned new things. Also, students reported that the family involvement activities in the social studies course helped their family members become conscious consumers and improve their self-confidence. Similar to the students, the family members reported that they had gained knowledge and experience by participating in the social studies course, became conscious consumers and better realized the importance of saving. The activities conducted in the social studies course had also contributed to the development of their self-confidence. These findings demonstrate that family involvement in the social studies course provides important benefits to family members as well as to students.

Çamlıbel Çakmak (2000) reports that family involvement activities make important contributions to the professional development of teachers, while the present study found that the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities contributed to the professional development of the social studies teacher. Both the students and the social studies teacher reported that social studies teacher developed professionally as a result of the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities. It was found that during the implementation phase, the social studies teacher used the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course also in other classes, and these findings of the study show that the teachers’ observation of the family involvement activities in one class session can be effective in another class. In addition, the students were of the opinion that the social studies teacher became more flexible and understanding toward the students after observing the researcher. This finding of the study is consistent with Akkaya’s (2007, p.79) finding that “Many teachers who participated in the study were of the opinion that family involvement activities contributed to the professional development of teachers.”

In the studies by Erdoğan and Demirkasımoğlu (2010) and by Selanik Ay and Aydoğdu (2016), the teachers reported that they had experienced problems with family members intervening in their work, while the present study found that family members who participated in the social studies course through planned teaching activities empathized with the social studies teacher. Related to this issue, some family members said that they understand teachers better, and realized that teachers had many responsibilities. Also, some family members reported that before the implementation phase of the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course, they thought that teachers were solely responsible for the education of their children. These family members reported that after participating in the social studies course, they came to empathize with the social studies teacher, and realized that teachers have many responsibilities and a heavy workload. This finding of the study shows

that achieving family involvement in the social studies course would not be a problem for teachers and it leads families to support the teacher in the education of their children.

The perceived inadequacy on the part of the family members regarding their participation in their children's education reduces their willingness to participate (Coleman & Churchill, 1997; Flynn, 2007; Gür & Kurt, 2011; Hornby, 2011). In a study by Gültekin and Kılıç (2014), it was found that family members viewed themselves as inadequate in terms of contributing to their children's education. The present study found, similarly, that some family members had feelings of inadequacy in terms of getting involved in the social studies course. Furthermore, some students thought that their parents could not help them in the social studies course because they had a low level of education, expressing a similar view. The social studies teacher who participated in the study shared the view expressed by the students and family members, reporting that some family members may lack the ability to provide children with knowledge related to the social studies course. However, the present study also found, similar to the findings of Barge and Loges (2003), that most students acquired new knowledge from family members during family involvement activities conducted at home and at school for the social studies course. It is probable that the students were able to acquire new knowledge from their families during the family involvement activities conducted in this course due to the fact that the social studies course is based on daily life, allowing all family members to share their experiences. Teachers may encourage family members to participate in the social studies course by holding activities based on the family members' life experiences. In addition, teachers may also help family members acquire new knowledge and achieve personal development by conducting activities in which the students assume the role of teacher.

The present study found that during the implementation phase of the family involvement activities in the social studies course, some family members had problems conducting the activities on time and making time for the activities. This finding of the study is consistent with those of the studies by Argon and Kıyıcı (2012), Bellibaş and Gümüş (2013), Hacısalihioğlu-Karadeniz et al. (2012) and Walhof (2016). To deal with this problem, social studies teachers should be flexible with family members who have long working hours when it comes to home-based family involvement activities, and in the case of activities to be conducted at school, they should plan hours that are suitable also for the working family members.

The participation of the father in education has positive effects on the cognitive and emotional development of children, and children feel better when their fathers are involved (Berger & Riojas Cortez, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2004). The studies conducted by Akkaya (2007), Balli et al. (1998), and Şad Gürbüztürk (2013) show that fathers tend to be less involved in their children's education than their mothers. The present study also found that, in most families, the fathers participated in the family involvement activities conducted in the social studies course to a lesser degree than mothers. On the other hand, many students reported that they had a great time with their fathers during the activity involving working with fathers, during which they felt very happy and learned new things about their fathers' work. These findings indicate that getting fathers involved in their children's education is an important requirement.

This study found that conducting the social studies course with family involvement activities had many important benefits, such as strengthening communication between families and teachers, supporting the development of students in multiple ways, raising awareness among families regarding the importance of supporting their children, and contributing to the personal development of family members and the professional development of the social studies teacher. During the implementation phase of the study, the family members and students were observed to engage in actions such as choosing domestic goods over others, avoiding littering, collecting litter and protecting the environment in general.

The family members and students were found to associate what they had learned in the social studies course conducted with family involvement activities with their daily lives. This finding of the

study indicates that, when supported by their families, students tend to apply what they learn in the social studies course in their daily lives in a short period of time. For the social studies course to reach its aims, students should apply what they learn in class to their personal lives. In conclusion, making use of family involvement activities in the social studies course increases the effectiveness of social studies education.

According to the results of the research, recommendations related to providing family involvement in social studies education are listed as “recommendations for practitioner” and “recommendations for researchers”.

Recommendations for practitioners

- Social studies teachers should be offered on-the-job training on encouraging family involvement in the course.
- This study is based on the objectives of the 2005 Social Studies Curriculum. It can be said that the 2005 and 2018 Social Studies Curriculum are similar in terms of limited objectives related to family involvement. The Social Studies Curriculum should include learning outcomes related to family involvement in the social studies course.
- In order to raise awareness among families, educational activities related to family involvement in social studies can be organized for families.

Recommendations for researchers

- Experimental or mixed design studies should be conducted on the effects of home, school and out-of-school family involvement activities in the social studies course on students and families.
- The Social Studies Curriculum should be supported by family involvement activities, and the achievement of learning outcomes in the curriculum should be evaluated.
- The effects of family involvement in the social studies course on the development of students' skills and values should be examined.

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