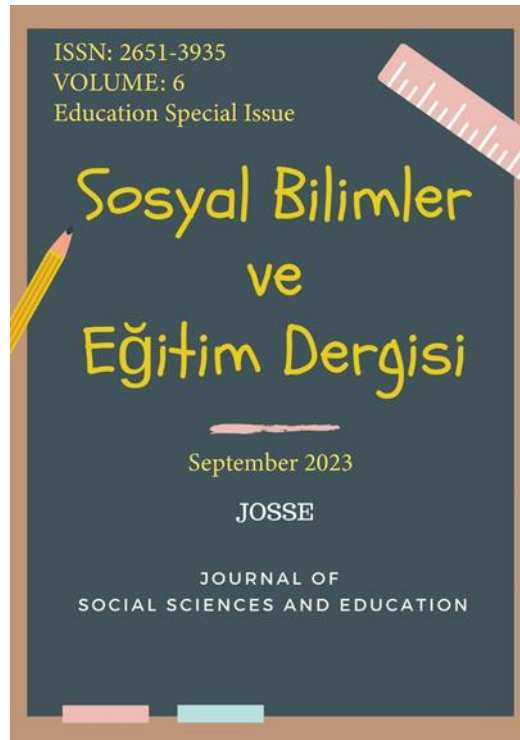


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An Analysis of Middle School Social Studies Textbooks with a Focus on Media Themes

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes middle school social studies textbooks regarding media coverage. Document analysis was the preferred methodology of data collection. The data was gathered from 5th, 6th, and 7th grade middle school textbooks, identified via random sampling. The Media Concept and Related Concepts Textbook Review Form, developed by the researcher, was utilized during the data collection process. Researcher triangulation was applied during the analysis phase. The media-related textbook content was encapsulated within the following five themes: Media elements, media effects, media functions, media literacy, and media ethics. Findings for the media elements were categorized into media development, media tools, media types, media institutions, and media workers. Another major theme emerging from the analysis of the textbook content was media effects, which contained both positive and negative dimensions related to the impacts of media. Media functions constituted another media content theme emerging from the textbook analysis. This theme encompassed the media functions of transmission, speed, and ease of processing, communication and communication tools, education, and digital content. The media literacy theme encompassed findings categorized into thematic concepts, basic skills, and consciousness-raising. The final main theme emerging from the textbook analysis was media ethics. This theme included findings associated with controllable and regulable activities and ethical rights.

Keywords: Media, middle school, social studies, textbook analysis

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Introduction

The media exerts substantial influence across numerous facets of individual and social life. In addition to impacting individuals' attitudes and behaviors, media elements continue to shape the cultural, economic, political, and social orientations of society. Since early life, individuals encounter media elements within the family context. They subsequently integrate the media-cultivated attitudes and behaviors into society. Moreover, from communication to shopping, the media furnishes society with convenience in many domains through its tools and platforms. The expansive sphere of influence and life opportunities has established the media as a center of power. Alongside other power centers like money, politics, culture, and information, media elements have faced criticism for fostering detrimental environments and models, not just positive ones, for individuals and society (Erol, 2022; Hong & Ryu, 2022; Khatrik et al., 2022; Robinson, et al., 2022; Ybarra et al., 2022; Yıldız, 2023).

The media refers to tools like newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet that facilitate communication without face-to-face contact (Tüzel, 2012). With developing technology, media tools occupy an integral role in human life given the environments and opportunities they provide (Bayer & Bulut Özek, 2021). The media represents a shaping factor in people's lives today (Asrak Hasdemir, 2012). The lifestyles, communication styles, interaction modes, and cultural elements maintained among people for centuries have transformed radically with media growth (Kıran, 2020). Regardless of time and place, media tools provide convenience across many domains, including information access, dissemination, communication, education, socialization, and entertainment. Frequently used internet-based applications appeal to many aspects of life from ages 7 to 70. The media pervades individual and social life through diverse platforms like cartoons, games, communication, education, e-commerce, and more.

Albeit its beneficial and facilitating features, the media harbors some risks. Media tools commonly aim to direct society as desired by dominant states/institutions, encourage consumption, and activate, pacify, modify, divide, or unite society (Mora, 2008). Additionally, the media can introduce risks like violence, negative models, cultural assimilation, and criminal elements. Media reflects violence through the many messaging tools integrated into its content (Özer, 2017). Numerous violent elements infiltrate mass media, especially news, daytime programs, and social media. These elements detrimentally influence families and children (Çoban & Kaplan, 2022). Young children are especially

vulnerable to such risks. Since children are born into a visually-oriented world, they undergo socialization where visuality holds priority, thus facing effects from school, family, environment, and notably, the media (Dinçer & Yılmazkol, 2009; Karaboğa, 2018). Excessive media use can foster addiction to games, movies, and the like. Contingent on addiction, physical and mental health issues like malnutrition (Ayas & Göral, 2023) and attention/behavioral problems may emerge (Güvendi et al., 2019; Hazar & Ekici, 2021; Sallayıcı & Yöndem, 2020).

An individual's development of awareness towards the risks of the media, correctly analysing and evaluating the message coming from the media, and exhibiting conscious behaviours are associated with literacy skills (Bendhaj, 2023). Media literacy represents a vital skill in fully and accurately comprehending media messages and mitigating risks that children face in media settings. Media literacy is acknowledged as an important skill in raising children's and youths' media awareness (Avşar, 2013). It proves critical for conscious media use, complete and precise perception, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of transmitted messages. With media literacy skills, individuals can understand message world backgrounds and subtexts, actively evaluating and commenting on these codes to develop personal judgments (Paker, 2015). Media literacy skills are taught through planned, programmed school activities across the education process.

Turkey's Ministry of National Education curricula aim to cultivate multifariously knowledgeable, skilled, and valued individuals from preschool to higher education. Published in the Official Gazette No. 29581 on January 2, 2016, and numbered 29581, the Turkish Qualifications Framework seeks to enable individuals to utilize information/communication technologies safely and critically within 'Digital Competence' (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık, 2016). Along with digital competence, the Social Studies curriculum incorporates the 'Media Literacy' skill and associated values, skills, and concepts. Citizenship ideals, cultural values, and the ability to consciously leverage information/communication technologies number among the program's specific objectives. Additionally, the program includes critical thinking, willpower, communication, saving, and other skills relatable to media literacy. It promotes raising productive, active individuals capable of learning, questioning, researching, and analyzing information (MoNE, 2023).

Curricula are actualized through textbooks, an important educational tool. As resources that assist student learning during and after lessons, textbooks are key instructional materials. Prepared per specific programs to fulfill educational goals, textbooks constitute the

basic material for education and the most widely utilized tool. Viewed as the primary information source, students use textbooks to learn at school and at home (Tarman & Kuran, 2015). Thus, textbooks represent the main educational resource for school-based media literacy. Textbooks are among the primary materials in teaching/learning (Güzel & Şimşek, 2012; Nalçacı, 2011). The ‘media’ theme status in social studies textbooks constitutes this research’s problem statement.

The objectives of the Social Studies course to raise citizens, interconnect with life and current events, and cover skills supporting digital competence and conscious media/communication technology usage establish the subject of this study in social studies and media literacy. Different studies on education and media exist in the literature (Altun, 2010; Avşar, 2013; Bayer & Bulut Özek, 2021; Bendhaj, 2023; Bulger, 2023; Dolanbay, 2022; Fernandes et al., 2022; Gupta et al., 2023; Asrak Hasdemir, 2012; Kıran, 2020; Yao, 2019). Social studies textbooks have been analyzed concerning values education approaches (Ersoy & Şahin, 2012), values (Kuş et al., 2013), cultural values and ideology (Pandhiani et al., 2016), conscious consumerism (Dere & Aktaşlı, 2019), global issues (Dere & Uçar, 2020), skills (Altay, 2020), personalities (Batmaz, 2022; Osmanoğlu & Cantemür, 2020), current events (Öztürk & Veziroğlu, 2020), power and ideology (Wangdu, 2020), society and knowledge (Hansen & Puustinen, 2021), religion (Zhao, 2020), empathy (Kan & Tebiş, 2022), citizenship values and skills (Gökçınar, 2022), disadvantaged groups (Demirezen & Kaya, 2023) and geographical elements (Ersoy & Ayaydın, 2023). However, no large-scale research has examined social studies textbooks through a media lens.

This study aims to identify the media-themed content and its dimensions/sub-dimensions within social studies textbooks. The problem statement of the study is ‘What is the media-themed content of social studies textbooks?’. By elucidating the media-related dimensions and sub-dimensions in social studies textbooks, this research holds importance for contributing to the relevant literature, researchers, educators, and policymakers in the educational domain.

Method

Model

This research utilized document analysis. The researcher obtained and reviewed the document(s) constituting the data source. The processed documents underwent systematic

analysis (Batmaz & Yurtbakan, 2022). Document analysis can be favored as a design or method itself in qualitative research when direct observation or interviews are infeasible for data collection. This method has a unique examination system with certain stages, including accessing documents, validating authenticity, comprehending, analyzing, and utilizing data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

Sample and Population

The materials for this study encompassed all social studies textbooks selected randomly from those taught by the Ministry of National Education in the 2022-2023 academic year. These randomly chosen social studies texts served as the data sources analyzed in the research. The population comprised the entire set of social studies textbooks approved by the Ministry of National Education for the 2022-2023 academic year across all grade levels. From this population, the sample included randomly selected social studies textbooks at the 5th, 6th, and 7th grade levels only. The data within the sampled textbooks was not further subset or sampled. Rather, the full texts of the randomly selected 5th through 7th-grade social studies textbooks underwent thorough analysis (Table 1).

Table 1

Bibliographic Information of the Selected Social Studies Textbooks for Analysis

	Textbook	Authors	Publication Acceptance Year	Publisher
1	Social Studies 5th Grade Textbook	Seçil Büket HARUT	2019	ATA
2	Social Studies 6th Grade Textbook	Cengiz Yıldırım, Fatih Kaplan, Hayriye Kuru, Mukaddes Yılmaz	2019	MONE
3	Social Studies 7th Grade Textbook	Öznür Açıl, Hülya Güvenç, Ayşegül Hayta, Sezcan Kılıç	2019	MONE

Data Collection Tools

Textbook analysis utilized a specialized instrument developed by the researcher called the *Textbook Review Form in terms of Media Concepts and Related Concepts*. This form was created based on an extensive review of previous literature on media and education as well as feedback from subject matter experts (Bolat & Kazancı, 2023; Cao, et al., 2022; Doğan, et al., 2009; Hasasneh, 2022; Khatrik et al., 2022; Soydan, 2023; Üztemur & Dinç, 2020; Yıldız, 2023; Zafer & Vardarlıer, 2019). The resulting form contains 40 distinct concepts associated with media themes and coverage based on this literature review and expert feedback. The

Textbook Review Form provided a standardized way to identify, classify, and analyze media-related content within the sampled textbooks systematically. Each of the 40 concepts included on the form represented a specific media theme, issue, or term recommended for inclusion in textbooks according to the experts. These 40 concepts across all key facets of media served as the basis for reviewing and coding the sampled textbooks' contents related to media. Table 2 below provides the full listing of all 40 media-related concepts contained in the Textbook Review Form used to guide the textbook analysis.

Table 2

Some Concepts Associated with Media Terminology

<i>Concepts</i>			
Shopping	E-service	Willpower	Virtual office
Vehicle	E-commerce	Waste	Virtual environment
Information	<u>Film</u>	Mass communication	Motion Picture/Movie
Knowledge sharing	Newspaper	Media	Responsibility
Information system	Public Network/WWW	Media literacy	Social media
Computer	News	Distance shopping	Savings
Cell phone	Telecommunication	Fashion	Television
Series	Communication	Popular culture	Consumer information system
E-government	Communication tool	Radio	Consumption
Entertainment	Internet	Advertisement	Video
Other:			

Data Collection and Analysis

The data source was the 5th, 6th, and 7th grade social studies textbooks. Aligning with written material analysis, the data collection and analysis process proceeded as follows: (1) Textbooks were obtained online; (2) Texts were reviewed according to "Textbook Review Form" concepts, with identified concepts marked. Other media-related concepts were also considered; (3) Textbooks underwent initial complete review; (4) Marked concept-containing texts were re-read word-by-word and line-by-line. However, visuals other than 'smart signs'¹ and the concept of 'General network'², which expresses where the text is taken from, were not included in the analysis; (5) Context-related codes emerged through content analysis. Code selection ensured media concept contextualization; (6) Related codes were compiled into a separate table, generating categories; (7) Semantically associated categories produced themes;

¹ As visual expressions, smart signs were included in analysis since they can be expressed visually. Other visuals were only considered for finding-supporting explanations.

² Non-media contextual concepts like 'General Network' were excluded.

(8) Concepts were compared to literature explanations; (9) Descriptive statistics, visuals, and quotations explained the reported data.

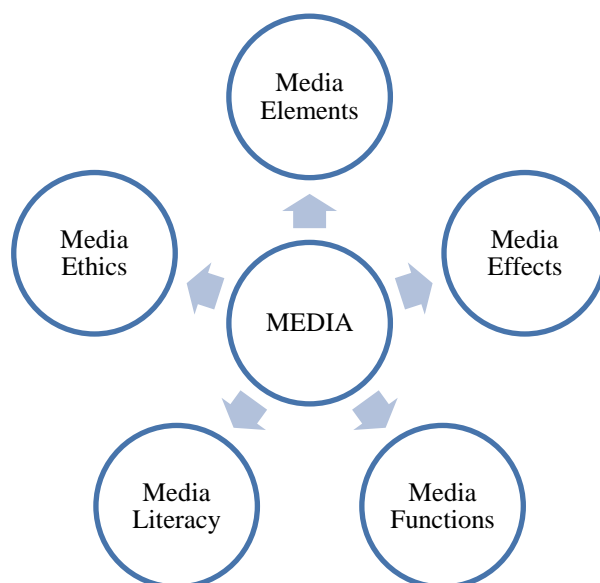
Words and lines constituted the analysis units. ‘Multi-researcher triangulation’ involving multiple independent analyses of the same qualitative data was utilized to prevent researcher bias (Patton, 2014). Analyses were conducted with a social studies teacher master’s student and two academics. The analysts collaboratively worked online, holding panel discussions throughout. Concept and theme generation achieved 100% agreement within this framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, findings were supported and illustrated by selected direct quotations and visuals.

Findings

The findings on media-themed content in social studies textbooks are presented below, along with sample visuals and expressions supporting these findings. Through in-depth analysis of the social studies textbooks, the research identified five overarching, primary dimensions related to the media theme embedded within the textbook contents. As depicted visually in Figure 1, these five key media-related dimensions contained media elements, media effects, media functions, media literacy, and media ethics based on the conceptual analysis of the social studies textbooks.

Figure 1

Categories Related to Media in Social Studies Textbooks



Media Elements in Social Studies Textbooks

One major theme emerging from the textbook media content analysis was ‘media elements.’ Findings for the media elements theme were categorized into media development, media tools, media types, media institutions, and media workers. Table 3 displays these categories and associated findings.

Table 3

Categorization of Media Elements in Social Studies Textbooks

Theme	Category	Content	5th grade		6th grade		7th grade	
			<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Media Elements	Media Development	The invention of media tools	0	0%	0	0%	17	7%
		Inventors of media tools	0	0%	0	0%	18	8%
		Communication and telecommunication technologies	3	3%	5	4%	19	8%
		Widespread use of media tools	5	5%	2	2%	3	1%
	Media Tools	Printed media tools (<i>Books, magazines, newspapers, etc.</i>)	10	10%	9	8%	32	14%
		Digital media tools (<i>e-book, e-magazine, e-publication, etc.</i>)	3	3%	0	0%	0	0%
		Mechanical media tools (<i>printing, etc.</i>)	0	0%	0	0%	14	6%
		Communication and telecommunication tools (<i>Mass Media [TV, computer, radio, telegraph, telephone, etc.].</i>)	23	22%	13	11%	73	32%
		Digital media providers (<i>Internet, public/global/social network, etc.</i>)	48	47%	11	10%	14	6%
		Messaging tools with message content (<i>Smart Signs, advertising, email, etc.</i>)	5	5%	46	40%	19	8%
	Media Type	Press and broadcasting	2	2%	1	1%	3	1%
		Audiovisual media (<i>movie, news, e-news, etc.</i>)	0	0%	19	17%	2	1%
		Social media	3	3%	7	6%	0	0%
	Media Institutions	Special Media Organization	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
		Official Media Institution	1	1%	2	2%	11	5%
	Media Worker	Occupations (<i>Journalist, designer, etc.</i>)	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%
	TOTAL			103	100%	115	100%	228

The media element theme in Table 3 shows substantial 7th-grade textbook content on media development, while information about media inventors and inventions was absent at other grade levels. Among textbook media tools, communication/communication tools were more prevalent than other concepts. Coverage of media institutions and workers was less extensive than in other areas. Given its educational importance, the limited social media

content at the 5th and 6th-grade levels and its complete absence from 7th-grade texts is noteworthy.

The Effects of Media in Social Studies Textbooks

Another major theme emerging from the analysis of the textbook content was ‘media effects,’ which contained both *positive* and *negative* dimensions related to the impacts of media. The key findings categorized as positive media effects are displayed visually in Table 4, while Table 5 summarizes the negative media effects evidenced in the textbook contents. This media effects theme encompassed these two distinct but related categories of findings reflecting the favorable and unfavorable influences of media documented in the social studies textbooks.

Table 4

Positive Effects of Media in Social Studies Textbooks

Theme	Category	Content	5th grade		6th grade		7th grade	
			<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Positive Effects of Media	Social and Human Relations	Building public opinion	0	0%	2	11%	0	0%
		Idea and solution generation	0	0%	2	11%	1	2%
		Developing empathy	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
		Influencing society	0	0%	2	11%	14	27%
		Increased social interaction and cooperation (<i>inter-communal cooperation and communication, global networking, new business opportunities</i>)	3	10%	1	5%	8	16%
	Improved Quality of Life and Welfare	High living standards	1	3%	0	0%	1	2%
		Time and cost savings	2	7%	0	0%	4	8%
	Cultural Impacts	Cultural contributions and innovations	1	3%	1	5%	5	10%
	Digital Transformation and Technological Facilitation	Digital facilitation (<i>shopping, trade, production, health, education, etc.</i>)	10	34%	5	26%	9	18%
	Information Access and Sharing	Easy access to information	9	31%	2	11%	4	8%
Telecommunication		3	10%	4	21%	4	8%	
TOTAL			29	100%	19	100%	51	100%

Table 4 indicates social studies textbooks incorporated positive media impacts, spanning *Social and Human Relations, Quality of Life and Welfare Increase, Cultural Effects, Digital Transformation and Technological Facilitation, Information Access, and Sharing*. Cooperation/communication between societies, global networking, and new business opportunities were the most frequently mentioned positives. Textbooks also stated digital

facilitation has eased shopping, trade, production, health, education, and information access. Less coverage addressed media influences on public opinion, opinion formation, and solution development.

Table 5

Negative Effects of Media in Social Studies Textbooks

Theme	Category	Content	5th grade		6th grade		7th grade	
			<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Negative Effects of the Media	Social and Communication Problems	Asociality	1	2%	0	0%	2	7%
		Communication problems	6	11%	0	0%	1	3%
	Addiction and Psychological Effects	Addiction <i>(TV, games, technology, etc.)</i>	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%
		Behavior disorder	0	0%	1	2%	1	3%
		Mood change	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Online Dangers and Insecurity	Violent and risky sites	15	28%	0	0%	0	0%
		Fraud	4	8%	0	0%	0	0%
		Information pollution	21	40%	0	0%	9	31%
	Cultural Impacts	Presenting unrealistic role models	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
		Cultural imperialism <i>(eroding and changing family, culture and values, etc.)</i>	0	0%	16	27%	3	10%
		Culture erosion <i>(corruption of language and values, etc.)</i>	4	8%	7	12%	0	0%
	Consumption and Perception Management	Consumption culture <i>(Changing consumption habits, leading to consumption, fashion, brand passion)</i>	0	0%	13	22%	8	28%
		Spread of popular culture	2	4%	18	31%	0	0%
		Distorted perception	0	0%	1	2%	3	10%
		Negative model presentation	0	0%	3	5%	0	0%
TOTAL			53	100%	59	100%	29	100%

Table 5 displays negative textbook media effects on *Social and Communication Problems, Addiction and Psychological Effects, Online Dangers and Insecurity, Cultural Effects, Consumption, and Perception Management*. Online danger and insecurity coverage, mainly regarding information pollution and violent/risky content sites, was proportionally highest in 5th grade. Cultural imperialism and consumer culture were more pronounced in 6th grade. Information pollution and consumer culture predominated in 7th-grade books. Unbalanced media content distribution between books was also striking.

The Functions of Media in Social Studies Textbooks

‘Media functions’ constituted another media content theme emerging from the textbook analysis. This theme encompassed the media functions of *transmission, speed, and ease of processing, communication and communication tools, education, and digital content*. Table 6 presents the key findings related to this media functions theme.

Table 6

Functions of Media in Social Studies Textbooks

Theme	Category	Content	5th grade		6th grade		7th grade		
			<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Functions of the Media	Transmission	Information and news transmission	0	0%	1	17%	26	43%	
		Regulation and supervision	0	0%	4	67%	1	2%	
		Printing and publishing	0	0%	0	0%	9	15%	
	Speed and Transaction Facilitation	Acceleration (<i>Process, organization, etc.</i>)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	
		Communication and Communication Tools	Broadcasting (<i>Radio activities, TV activities</i>)	0	0%	0	0%	3	5%
	Communication with the masses		1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	
	Global interaction network (<i>e-commerce environment, information access environment, cultural exchange, cultural imposition, global market, etc.</i>)		0	0%	1	17%	18	30%	
	Virtual interactions (<i>site/museum visit, etc.</i>)		0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	
	Cross-Cultural Interaction		0	0%	0	0%	2	3%	
	Education and Digital Content	Digital content creation in education	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	
	TOTAL			1	100%	6	100%	60	100%

The results shown in Table 6 demonstrate generally low frequencies and percentages associated with the media functions theme at the 5th and 6th-grade levels based on the textbook analysis. In contrast, the 7th-grade textbook provided comparatively more coverage and emphasis on the media functions of information/news transmission and enabling a global interaction network.

Media Literacy in Social Studies Textbooks

An additional major theme identified through the textbook analysis was ‘media literacy.’ The media literacy theme encompassed findings categorized into *thematic concepts, basic skills, and consciousness-raising*. Table 7 summarizes the key findings relating to this media literacy theme.

Table 7*Media Literacy in Social Studies Textbooks*

Theme	Category	Content	5th grade		6th grade		7th grade	
			<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Media Literacy	Basic Concepts	Media	2	8%	8	73%	3	33%
		Media literacy	2	8%	0	0%	0	0%
		Public Network/WWW	0	0%	0	0%	1	11%
		Computer	0	0%	0	0%	1	11%
	Basic Skills	Access to information	3	12%	0	0%	0	0%
		Using and sharing knowledge	2	8%	0	0%	0	0%
		Critical Evaluation of Information	7	27%	1	9%	2	22%
	Consciousness Raising	Assessing media effect	4	15%	1	9%	0	0%
		Becoming media literate	6	23%	1	9%	2	22%
	TOTAL			26	100%	11	100%	9

Notable results include substantially greater media literacy content on skills and consciousness-raising in the 5th-grade textbook compared to the other textbooks. Specifically, the 5th-grade book provided comparatively more coverage of critical analysis of information related to media literacy skills. Additionally, the analysis revealed considerable variation in the frequencies and percentages associated with the media literacy theme across grade levels.

Media Ethics in Social Studies Textbooks

The final main theme emerging from the textbook analysis was ‘media ethics.’ This theme included findings associated with *controllable and regulable activities and ethical rights*, as shown in Table 8. Most of the textbook content linked to media ethics was contained in the 7th-grade textbook, with the least media ethics coverage appearing in the 5th-grade textbook. The 7th-grade textbook uniquely addressed media ethics issues like freedom of the press, while the 6th-grade textbook alone covered protecting ideas and works related to media. The grade level distinctions in coverage as well as the minimal media ethics content in the 5th grade textbook are particularly noteworthy results.

Table 8*Media Ethics in Social Studies Textbooks*

Theme	Category	Content	5th grade		6th grade		7th grade	
			<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Media Ethics	Auditable and Regulatory Activities	Auditable activities	0	0%	3	14%	1	2%
		Regulatable activities	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
		Press publication principles	1	100%	0	0%	1	2%
		Responsibility to provide accurate	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%

	news						
	Uncontrolled information in the Mass Media (MM)	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Ethical Rights	Freedom of thought	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
	Right to information	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%
	Right to protection of ideas and works	0	0%	17	77%	0	0%
	Accurate information and communication	0	0%	0	0%	9	20%
	Expressing and disseminating thought	0	0%	1	5%	10	22%
	Freedom of mass communication	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
	Privacy of private life	0	0%	0	0%	13	28%
	Freedom of the press	0	0%	0	0%	8	17%
TOTAL		1	100%	22	100%	46	100%

Some Examples of Media-themed Statements in Social Studies Textbooks

To provide illustrative examples of the media content themes identified through analysis, Table 9 compiles sample textual excerpts and statements from the social studies textbooks reflecting each of the major media-related themes. These example statements from the textbook contents serve to concretely represent and reinforce the key media themes that emerged inductively based on a systematic analysis of the embedded textbook content on media elements, effects, functions, literacy, and ethics.

Table 9

Some Examples of Media-Themed Statements in Social Studies Textbooks

Book and Page No.	Expression	Relevant Thematic Context
7/171	"Electronic books can be defined as virtual books that we can read on computers, tablets or smartphones."	Media Elements
6/252	"Popular culture promises to liberate the individual in its advertisements. However, dressing according to changing fashions and choosing between several brands of fast food actually shows how limited the individual's freedom is."	Media Effect
7/151	"Countries are developing digital content to improve the quality of educational activities. "	Media Functions
5/95	"Media literacy aims to critically analyze and evaluate the information obtained through the media."	Media Literacy
7/28	"We see the most beautiful reflection of freedom of thought through the media. Because people express and spread their thoughts on a certain subject or event through media such as books, magazines, newspapers and television."	Media Ethics

Some Samples of Media-themed Images in Social Studies Textbooks

The findings presented so far focused on the textual analysis of media-themed content within the social studies textbooks. However, in addition to the textual media-related content, the social studies textbooks were also found to contain abundant related visuals, including

many images depicting and related to media topics and issues. To provide concrete illustrations of these visual depictions of media embedded throughout the social studies textbooks, examples of these media-themed textbook images are displayed in the figures below. These example visuals represent and complement the textual findings on media themes already presented.

Figure 2

Media Tools (Harut, 2019, p.95)



Figure 3

Digital Media Tools (Açıl et al., 2019, p. 171)



Figure 4

Consumption and Perception Management - Spread of Popular Culture (Yıldırım et al., 2019, p.250)

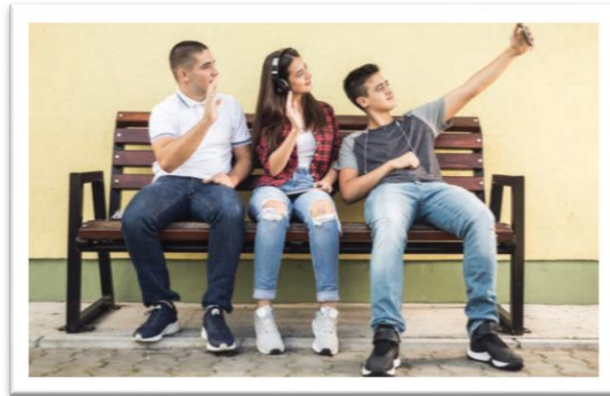


Figure 5

Ethical Rights-Privacy of Private Life (Açıl et al., 2019, p.31)

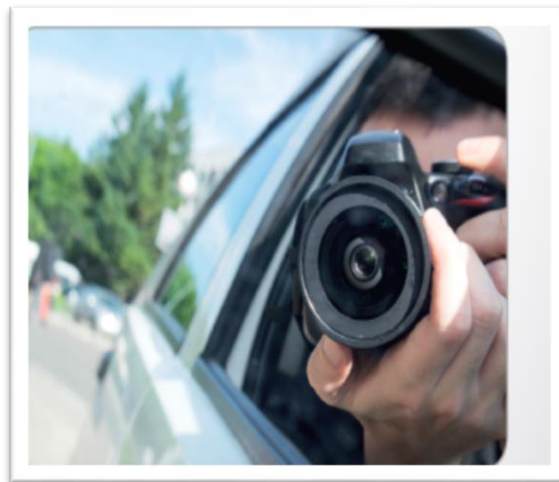


Figure 6

Online Dangers and Insecurity (Harut, 2019, p.97)



Figure 7

Education and Digital Content (Açıl et al., 2019, p.151)



Figure 8

Communication and Communication Tools (Harut, 2019, p.88)

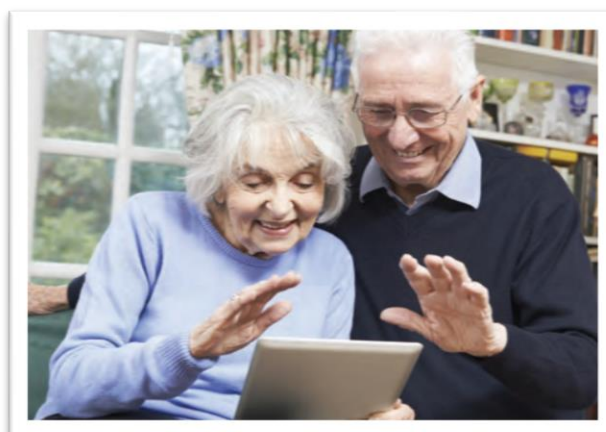


Figure 9

Online Dangers and Insecurity (Açıl et al., 2019, p.30)



Figure 10

Addiction and Psychological Effects (Harut, 2019, p.97)



Figure 11

Messaging Tools with Message Content (Yıldırım et al., 2019, p.136)



Discussion and Results

This study identified five distinct dimensions and 24 associated sub-dimensions explaining the related textbook content. The main research result dimensions were *media elements*, *media impact*, *media functions*, *media literacy*, and *media ethics*. All dimension frequencies and percentages evidenced irregular distribution both within individual textbooks and between texts. Erol (2021) has found that the content related to digital literacy and media literacy that can be associated with media is not evenly distributed in social studies textbooks, and in fact, that this content is included in the textbooks of the 5th and 7th grades but not in the textbooks of the 6th and 4th grades. These results highlight the need to review proportional topic distribution for media-themed content across textbooks. On the other hand, Sensekerici (2022) has determined that media-related quotations in social studies textbooks, which he examined within the framework of the themes expressed by UNESCO, are sufficient in terms of quantity but do not reflect the necessary diversity.

The media elements in the analyzed textbooks are categorized as *media development*, *media tools*, *media type*, *media institutions*, and *media workers*. While media development content was very frequent in the 7th-grade text, other grade levels omitted information on media inventions and inventors. Communication/communication tools had the highest frequency among media tools. The social media concept had low 5th and 6th grade frequencies, despite social media's educational importance. As Ayaydın and Yıldız Ayaydın (2018) found, social media contributes some middle school student skills and values like cooperation and patriotism, yet negatively impacts responsibilities, studying, and family. Per Koç and Koç (2023), social media increased socialization, solidarity, sharing, and patriotism but decreased empathy, respect, love, and honesty. Although beneficial for individual content production/sharing, Eşitti (2016) notes social media discourages action-taking. Therefore, with attention to contributions/risks, textbooks should incorporate social media and other media elements to promote awareness.

Identified positive textbook media effects were *social and human relations*, *quality of life and increase in welfare*, *cultural effects*, *digital transformation*, and *technological facilitation*, *information access*, and *sharing*. Negative effects encompassed *social and communication problems*, *addiction and psychological effects*, *online dangers*, and *insecurity*, *cultural effects*, *consumption*, and *perception management*. As Arslan (2004) states, media-disseminated messages positively or negatively shape perceptions, interpretations, and

cultures. Coen et al. (2021) have determined that media contributes to issues related to children's body image and eating habits. Paton and Figeac (2015), on the other hand, have stated that it triggers aggression and tendencies towards violence. In this research, increased social interaction/cooperation, digital facilitation, and information access showed high positive frequencies, while high negatives were information pollution, violent/risky websites, cultural imperialism, consumer culture, and popular culture spread. Less frequent positives were public opinion formation and idea/solution generation.

The issue of violence identified among the negative effects of the media is similar to the study of Özer (2017), which states that media content contains violence. The phenomenon of violence identified in this study is one of the important negative features of the media. Mass media, programs, and social media contain many elements of violence (Çoban & Kaplan, 2022). As Özer (2017) states, the way to understand the phenomenon of violence in the media is possible by taking into account the media economy, the ideological violence of the media, and the upbringing theory that explains violence in terms of production, content, and consumption. Therefore, when reflecting on the media issue in textbooks, not only the individual but also the society should be considered. Here, textbook authors must incorporate associated social alongside individual impacts while reflecting the negative effects of the media in the book.

The functions of the media in the analyzed textbooks include *transmission, speed, and ease of processing, communication and communication tools, education, and digital content*. According to Sayın and Aydın (2019), students generally see the media as a source of information, a medium of participation, a tool that requires conscious use, a tool of influence and guidance, and a tool of danger. İlhan et al. (2014) found that students generally use the media for entertainment, leisure time activities, and information. A significant number of students think that media texts contain ideological messages and present a fictional world. In some studies, it has been found that media tools are used for purposes such as spending time, having fun, getting news, acquiring information, making friends, and establishing communication (Kocadaş & Kılıç, 2017; Mackenbrock & Kleinert, 2023; Yeo, 2014). Ekmen and Bakar (2019) found that social studies textbooks include many contributions of digital technologies that make our lives easier. These include sharing information, recognizing cultures, and providing communication and educational tools. These findings support the findings of the study.

Media literacy is another result of the analyzed textbooks. Within the scope of media literacy, the categories of *basic concepts*, *basic skills*, and *consciousness-raising* were found. Basic skills, consciousness-raising, and the ability to look critically at information stand out in 5th-grade textbooks. In 5th and 6th grade textbooks, the frequency values related to media literacy are quite low. Altay (2020) also included media literacy among the skills in social studies textbooks. He stated that the 5th-grade textbook did not include any skills related to media literacy. Ekmen and Bakar (2019) state that concepts such as media and networks in textbooks have decreased from past to present, but concepts such as technology and digital have increased significantly. The scarcity or absence of media literacy skills in the content of textbooks suggests that we should reflect this skill, which is important in many areas of daily life, in textbooks. İlhan et al. (2014) found that media-literate students started to question the media and gained a critical perspective towards media content.

Media ethics findings were *controllable and regulable activities* and *ethical rights*. These issues related to media ethics were covered mostly in the 7th-grade textbook and least in the 5th-grade textbook. Rights and freedoms related to media ethics were covered intensively at the 7th-grade level. Protection of ideas and works is included in the 6th-grade textbook. At the 5th-grade level, the scarcity of content on media ethics draws attention. Çoban and Kaplan (2022) state that much of the news presented and produced in the media are very limited in terms of ethical standards. Damlapınar and Balcı (2016) found that the priority issue in the media's news reporting process is ethics and responsibility, but the participants believe that media organizations partially fulfill their professional responsibilities. Ekmen and Bakar (2019) addressed the issue of ethics and security in the sub-dimensions of ethical values, digital citizenship, privacy, and security. According to Kocadaş and Kılıç (2017), the majority of young people believe that communication tools are not reliable. Many effects of the media, which is the channel of the message, on society are known by all of us. Education plays a vital role in cultivating new generations of students who are conscious and critically aware of the potential positives and negatives surrounding media, media messages, and media impacts. Textbooks constitute particularly important educational resources and materials that can help build this critical consciousness among students regarding the multifaceted effects and dimensions of media in contemporary society.

Recommendations

The finding frequencies for media-themed content evidenced disproportionate distribution within individual textbooks and across texts. The content does not systematically explain media concept dimensions from specific to general or vice versa. Some media-related concepts and skills were entirely omitted. Thus, aligning with the spiraling course structure, textbook authors should restructure media concept dimensions/sub-dimensions with proportional coverage, ensure expression integrity, and address deficiencies at each grade level.

This study analyzed middle school social studies textbooks. Future researchers examining this topic might focus on elementary social studies texts, analyze other subject area textbooks regarding media, or conduct cross-national social studies textbook comparisons using this study's findings. Researchers could also examine how well the results generalize to textbooks from different countries' educational systems and curricula. Comparing the current findings to equivalent data from social studies textbooks in other nations would reveal cross-cultural commonalities and distinctions in how media is incorporated into social studies education.

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