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The Influence of Cultural Capital on Students' Perceptions and Experiences of Hidden Curriculum

Kültürel Sermayenin Öğrencilerin Örtük Program Algıları ve Yaşantıları Üzerindeki İzleri

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Abstract: This study investigates the perceptions and experiences of ninth-grade students concerning the hidden curriculum at a science high school in Ankara, focusing on how cultural capital influences its manifestation. A qualitative case study was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews and observations. Throughout a 20-week period, 34 interviews were conducted with 17 purposively selected participants, one at the beginning and one at the end of the study, complemented by 10 days of observation over biweekly school visits. The collected data underwent content analysis, involving thorough reading, coding, and theme identification. The findings highlight that the cultural capital of students shaped their experiences and perceptions of the hidden curriculum, influencing their access to and use of social and material resources at school. Notably, students viewed their school primarily as a preparatory ground for exams rather than an institution aligned with the broader educational goals for science high schools. Additionally, the study observed differences in the experiences of boarder and extern students. The findings suggest that educators need to develop inclusive strategies that recognize and integrate students' varying cultural capital to foster a more emancipatory educational environment. Additionally, the study highlights the need for boarding schools to establish a participatory culture for extern students.

Keywords: Hidden curriculum, habitus, cultural capital, science high school, stratification

Öz: Bu çalışma, Ankara'da bir fen lisesindeki dokuzuncu sınıf öğrencilerinin örtük programa ilişkin algılarını ve yaşantılarını, kültürel sermayenin bunun şekillenmesindeki etkisini göz önünde bulundurarak incelemektedir. Çalışmada nitel bir durum çalışması kullanılmış, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve gözlemlerden yararlanılmıştır. Yirmi haftalık bir süre zarfında, amaçlı örneklemeyle seçilmiş 17 katılımcının her biri ile çalışmanın başında ve sonunda olmak üzere toplam 34 görüşme; her iki haftada bir gerçekleştirilen okul ziyaretleriyle 10 günlük gözlem yapılmıştır. Toplanan verilerde içerik analizi yapılmış, veriler titizlikle okunmuş, kodlanmış ve temalar belirlenmiştir. Bulgular, öğrencilerin kültürel sermayelerinin, okuldaki sosyal ve materyal kaynaklara erişimlerini ve kullanımlarını şekillendirdiğini ve örtük programa dair algı ve yaşantılarını etkilediğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öğrencilerin, okullarını öncelikli olarak fen liselerine dair daha geniş hedeflerle özdeşleşen bir kurum olarak değil de sınavlara iyi hazırlık yapan bir yer olarak ele aldıkları da gözlemlenmiştir. Ayrıca, yatılı ve gündüzlü öğrencilerin yaşantıları arasında da farklılıklar gözlemlenmiştir. Bulgular eğitimcilerin, öğrencilerin farklı kültürel sermayelerini göz önünde bulundurabilecek ve dâhil edecek daha kapsayıcı ve özgürleştirici bir eğitim ortamı geliştirmelerinin gereğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışmada yatılı okulların gündüzlü öğrenciler için daha katılımcı bir kültür oluşturmasının gereği vurgulanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Örtük program, habitus, kültürel sermaye, fen lisesi, tabakalaşma

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Introduction

Analyzing social actions requires an in-depth understanding of their underlying structures to reveal the unchallenged norms perceived as natural. Education plays a pivotal role in societal advancement by facilitating the acquisition and dissemination of culture. It enhances human conditions by improving knowledge, health, living standards, social fairness, and productivity, thereby serving as a fundamental instrument for social progress (Spiel et al., 2018). In Turkey, debates on educational reforms—from infrastructure and curriculum changes to administrative reorganization—are vital. Yet, understanding their real impact on schools demands more than generating and reviewing documents; it requires considering how these changes manifest in different contexts and how they are interpreted and experienced by students.

Culture equips individuals with a variety of resources, from symbolic tools to material items, enabling them to coexist with others (Smith, 2020). Whether born with linguistic patterns or not, one needs to navigate existing social relationships to understand cultural cues and find their place within society. Human cognition is shaped by culture and individual experience, alongside species-specific capacities influenced by social learning and cultural transmission (Barrett, 2020). Culture encompasses beliefs, customs, language, and values that connect people to social hierarchies, also serving as a form of domination (Swartz, 2013). It provides a framework for ordering reality, linking one's knowledge base and universe of interrelated things.

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory mediates between social structure and individual action through the lens of culture (Swartz, 2013). Central to this framework is the concept of habitus, a set of dispositions shaped by one's social environment, enabling individuals to interact dynamically with their surroundings (Ünal, 2004). Habitus influences perceptions, tastes, and practices by drawing on past experiences and cognitive structures. It not only reflects existing structures but also generates new ways of thinking and acting, thus explaining social actions as strategies shaped by the types of the capital one has accumulated (Swartz, 2013). Bourdieu also introduces the notion of field, defined by himself and Wacquant (1992) as a network of relationships among various positions, where individuals employ strategies to access resources. This theory views social action as both historical and relational. Another key concept from Bourdieu is "capital", which he argues is not only monetary but includes accumulated knowledge, skills, and social connections.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), the educational system establishes the institutional bases for

generating desired habitus, reproducing cultural norms and relations. Schools convey dominant class culture to dominated classes, implementing symbolic violence, which legitimizes and perpetuates power structures by masking the influence of family and social background (Özsöz, 2014). Bourdieu (1989) asserts that the social world functions as a symbolic system, with groups competing to legitimize their worldview. Symbolic violence imposes dominant symbols and meanings, transforming power into charisma (Jenkins, 1992; Türk, 2014).

The written curriculum, while appearing to dictate educational content, often becomes a mere set of guidelines that students must navigate. This process is heavily influenced by the students' habitus and cultural capital, which shape how they internalize and enact these guidelines. Pedagogic action, as Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) describe, involves cultural impositions that can be experienced as symbolic violence, varying significantly depending on whether students' habitus aligns with or diverges from the expected norms.

Hidden curriculum is not an isolated phenomenon but interacts dynamically with its participants, particularly affecting students who in turn influence it with their engagement (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). The influence of students' cultural capital is significant in this context, indicating that the hidden curriculum serves as a critical site where the interplay of cultural capital can profoundly impact educational outcomes (Jukić, 2019). To fully comprehend these dynamics, it is essential to view the hidden curriculum as a dynamic, reflexive structure that both shapes and is shaped by the relationships within the educational setting. Such an understanding allows for a deeper exploration of underlying, often overlooked educational practices and the real conditions affecting students.

In contemporary educational discourse, much emphasis is placed on the explicit curricula, the overtly taught knowledge and skills within schools. However, the influence of the hidden curriculum, which includes the implicit cultural norms, values, and expectations conveyed through everyday practices and interactions within the educational setting, remains under-examined. Hidden curriculum not only shapes students' cognitive and social development but also plays a crucial role in the reproduction of social inequalities. Despite its significance, the mechanisms through which the hidden curriculum interacts with students' cultural capital to perpetuate or challenge existing social hierarchies are not well investigated. This study aims to uncover how the hidden curriculum, as mediated by students' cultural capital, contributes to the perpetuation of social inequalities within the educational environments. By focusing on the implicit lessons that students learn about power, privilege, and social structure, this study seeks to offer insights into the subtle ways education contributes to social reproduction. This is critical for developing educational strategies that promote equity and inclusiveness rather than unconsciously reinforcing existing societal disparities.

Cultural Capital

Individuals bring diverse characteristics and opportunities to the school setting. Bourdieu defines four types of capital: cultural, social, economic, and symbolic. Social capital involves existing or potential opportunities from social connections; economic capital includes monetary resources; and symbolic capital is the power from recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, 1989). These capitals determine the resources available to individuals and influence their social experiences. Cultural capital, the aggregation of historically experienced resources, impacts agents' experiences, highlighting the importance of varied capitals in understanding social dynamics.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that all pedagogic actions are symbolic violence, imposing an arbitrary culture on those without it. Understanding this requires examining cultural capital. Lamont and Small (2008) describe culture as symbolic boundaries, separating worthy from unworthy based on moral and economic systems. This view suggests that culture symbolizes and materializes values, influencing individuals' decisions and generating structures related to their choices (Ball et al., 2002). Thus, education can reproduce existing societal conditions through cultural capital and symbolic boundaries.

Culture creates classification systems linked to symbolic power, and schools impose these dominant systems, facilitating the production, transfer, and accumulation of cultural capital (Swartz, 2013). This accumulation varies among groups, leading to societal stratification. Bourdieu explains this using habitus and cultural capital, with habitus representing the unconscious mindset about success and societal function shared within social classes (Swartz, 2013). Bourdieu (1984) asserts that "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier," highlighting habitus' dynamic nature (p. 16). Habitus shapes educational preferences and experiences, revealing the underlying causes of social stratifications and their impact on individual choices and perceptions.

Bourdieu posits that cultural capital, which includes verbal abilities, general knowledge, and schooling information, influences success among students. Cultural capital, acquired through time, energy, and money, can lead to high-status occupations and salaries (Lamont et al., 2014; Swartz, 2013). Children inherit their parents' cultural capital, making cultural behaviors socially determined rather than individually admired (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Bourdieu, 2014).

Bourdieu (1986) identifies three forms of cultural capital. The embodied state is the cultural capital accumulated over time through self-development, beginning before schooling. The objectified state refers to cultural capital materialized in objects and media, shaping individuals' perceptions of reality. The institutionalized state encompasses academic qualifications, which Bourdieu argues legitimize the privileges of advantaged groups, creating the illusion of meritocracy without acknowledging underlying social advantages.

Hidden Curriculum

Hidden curriculum refers to the unwritten, unofficial curricular content and describes how students learn to navigate school life through daily interactions (Hemmings, 2000; Pratt, 2019). It is conceptualized as the essential rules, regulations, and routines necessary for functioning within the school system (Jackson, 1966). Jackson suggested that education requires socialization to learn to meet practical and social school requirements. Unlike the official curriculum with clear objectives (Demirel, 2005), the hidden curriculum includes various nonacademic learnings and social rules (Bandini et al., 2016; Çobanoğlu & Engin Demir, 2014; Lynch, 1989). It encompasses the environment's physical and social aspects (McLaren, 2003), teachers' moral messages (Shirk, 1976), and students' perceptions of the school.

Gordon (1982) categorizes hidden curriculum into three divisions: "outcomes", "environment", and "latent influence" (pp. 188-189). Outcomes include "academic learnings" related to the official curriculum and "nonacademic learnings" like

attitudes and social skills tied to the hidden curriculum. The environment encompasses the "cognitive environment" linked to formal structures and the "physical and social environments" tied to hidden curriculum. Latent influence involves "conscious, deliberate influence" from the manifest curriculum and "unconscious, unplanned influence" from the hidden curriculum. Gordon emphasizes that the hidden curriculum covers not only the subjects but also the methods, environment, relationships, and learning context.

Portelli (1993) offers four definitions of hidden curriculum: (a) unofficial expectations or implicit messages; (b) unintended learning outcomes or messages; (c) implicit messages from the structure of schooling; and (d) created by students (p. 345). Unlike Gordon (1982), Portelli's (d) emphasizes student agency. Snyder (1971) suggests that students create hidden curriculum through strategies to navigate complexities. However, Rose (1990) argues that psychological norms in democratic societies push individuals to conform, implying students may develop self-discipline practices, feeling unintended difficulties from the tasks set for them. School is an institution where power distribution influences participant practices, and the hidden curriculum reveals these effects. It provides opportunities or barriers that affect how individuals construct their identity and exercise power in specific spaces (Wilson & Cervero, 2003).

Skelton (1997) notes that the functionalist perspective sees school to instill necessary norms, values, and skills to sustain societal order. Hidden curriculum is viewed as an opportunity to enhance such learning experiences. Whether unintentional or deliberate, it plays a crucial role in conveying useful messages to students. Examples include using hidden curriculum to teach sustainability (Cotton et al., 2013; Winter & Cotton, 2012), support activities (Çubukçu, 2012), and promote democratic attitudes (Kiss et al., 2013). Veznedaroğlu (2007) summarizes the hidden curriculum in the functionalist approach as a tool to transfer societal values, produce shared norms, direct students to respect authority, enable surveillance, and eliminate rejected values and ideologies. It serves society's explicit or implicit requirements, fostering a unified, homogeneous society (pp. 14-15).

From a critical perspective, the hidden curriculum reinforces existing social structures and legitimizes them (Giroux, 1979). It directs working-class students towards labor roles (Anyon, 1980; Apple, 1980; Willis, 1981). Studies reveal mechanical learning in working-class schools (Anyon, 1980) and preparation for labor roles (Willis, 1981). Hidden curriculum also reproduces underachievement codes among indigenous people (Kidman et al., 2013), norms against marginalized groups (De Lissovoy, 2012), and racial biases in textbooks (Donovan, 2014). Apple (1980) and Giroux (1983) highlight student resistance to the hidden curriculum, influencing their attitudes. While schools are considered providing social mobility, this perspective views it as an illusion, ignoring working-class students' experiences and expectations.

Method

The purpose of the study is to explore how students' cultural capital influences their educational experiences, particularly through the hidden curriculum they perceive and experience. In line with this objective, the research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. How does cultural capital manifest among the participants?
2. What specific characteristics and patterns emerge in the school experiences of the participants?
3. How do the participants interpret their school life within the context of the hidden curriculum?

For the study, a qualitative research method is employed, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the unified experiences of individuals involved in a particular process (Maxwell, 2013). The study is designed as a case study, as it offers a thorough insight into complex phenomena and enables the examination of experiences and contexts from real life (Channaveer & Baikady, 2022). Key steps in conducting case studies, as outlined by Stake (2023), include bounding the case, selecting research themes, seeking data patterns, triangulating observations, exploring alternative interpretations, and developing general assertions.

Setting of the Study

The study aims to understand how cultural capital influences students' perceptions and experiences of hidden curriculum elements. Consequently, the study requires a school setting with students from diverse backgrounds and various levels of cultural capital. Educational research often considers factors like academic achievement or intelligence, which impact participant behavior. To examine how cultural capital influences students' school experiences through their perceptions and experiences of the hidden curriculum, participants were expected to have similar levels of academic achievement. Science high schools, established to prepare highly intelligent and talented students for higher education in math and science (MoNE, 1999), admit students based on exam results, ensuring a homogenous group in terms of intelligence and achievement. These schools also attract students from different regions and backgrounds more than other schools, and typically offer superior infrastructure and resources. Thus, a science high school in Ankara, Turkey, was selected for this study. This top school enrolls students with the highest exam scores, showing minimal variation in academic performance. To maintain confidentiality, the school's name is not disclosed. The chosen science high school is part of an effort to develop new curricula to align with technological advancements, particularly post-World War II. According to Article 6 of the regulation regarding science high schools, these schools aim to prepare talented students for higher education in math and science, train future scientists, equip students with research skills, and keep them updated on scientific and technological advancements (MoNE, 1999). They also aim to develop individuals capable of using new technologies and creating projects, and help students achieve foreign language proficiency for scientific research and technological developments.

School Campus and Facilities

The school where data were collected is designed to fulfill its stated goals, resembling a small university with a large campus. Located in a quiet area near the city center, it features a small forest with animals and is surrounded by a peaceful residential neighborhood. The campus is enclosed by a garden, with a security booth at the entrance. The school buildings, designed by the same architect of a prominent Turkish university, include administrative offices, laboratories, classrooms, a library, and staff facilities. The main building is divided into six connected sections, with three entrances.

Entering the school, visitors see announcements highlighting student achievements, conferences, and activities. Names of top graduates and various awards are displayed. The central corridor is well-lit with large windows and serves as a social area with plants, seating, and a giant chess set. Billboards showcase student research, activities, and cultural events. The corridor leads to a library with computers, magazines, books, and meeting areas. Another corridor connects to classrooms and laboratories, featuring scientific information, historical figures, and a table tennis area. The science laboratories, though somewhat old, are well-equipped, including a student-made 3D printer.

Additionally, there are two dormitory buildings for male and female students, a gym with various sports equipment, and an outdoor basketball court. The school's cultural center hosts conferences on diverse topics. The campus also includes a cafeteria, a music room with instruments, a canteen, and a social facility for alumni and parent-teacher associations. Staff lodgings are located near the gym. Overall, the campus is well-maintained and clean.

School Operations and Student Life

The school employs teachers selected by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), who are experts in their fields and experienced in science olympiads and project preparation. During observations, some teachers expressed that the school aims not only to prepare students for exams but also to equip them with skills for conducting scientific research. Therefore, in addition to the written curriculum, various activities and materials are used.

The school's corporate image is emphasized; the administration prepares informative posters for families and openly displays the school's and students' achievements. The school fosters a comfortable atmosphere with minimal strict rules, relying on the students' awareness and success. Generally, communication between students and teachers is open and easy. However, some teachers and security personnel expressed their idea that the students were given too much freedom during observations.

The school provides opportunities for students to showcase their work, such as science projects supervised by teachers and presented in contests like those organized by TUBİTAK. Successful projects are rewarded by the alumni foundation. The school participates in national and international science Olympiads, with chosen students trained by teachers and previous winners. The cultural center hosts seminars on various topics, such as popular experiments, new technologies, healthy nutrition, and sustainability. Design projects are organized to encourage skills like problem-solving, teamwork, and technical abilities as teachers expressed.

The school has a dormitory for 200 boys and a dormitory for 200 girls. The dormitory rooms accommodate four people. Dormitory life impacts students, fostering new friendships and shared experiences. Student clubs, including science, astronomy, theater, photography, folk dancing, music, and chess clubs, are active. For example, the music club organizes end-of-semester concerts, and the astronomy club arranges telescope workshops. Students also attend sports competitions and theater plays together. Lastly, the alumni foundation actively improves school conditions, renews physical infrastructure, provides seminars, supports Olympiad studies, and serves as a consultative committee for scientific matters.

Participants

A purposive sampling method is used, selecting participants who best exemplify the study's focus. Purposive sampling, as described by Yin (2011), targets the most relevant and useful data. Cresswell (2017) and Patton (2002) highlight its role in providing in-depth understanding. The maximum variation strategy, as Cresswell (2017) suggests, involves selecting participants based on predetermined criteria, here, their cultural capital. A 9th-grade class, comprising students from diverse backgrounds, was chosen because they are new to the school and likely rely on previous experiences to navigate the new environment, showcasing cultural capital in action.

Meetings with school administration and teachers were conducted to select the most representative sample and ensure the data's relevance to the aspects being investigated, as recommended by Berg (2001). Analyzing documents for four 9th-grade classes, one class of 32 students was chosen due to its diverse student body. Consent forms were distributed, and students provided information on indicators of their cultural capital, family background, and exam results via demographic forms. After analyzing the forms, 15 students were initially selected. Observations over two days brought out two additional students (P16 and P17) whose characteristics differed from others. Thus, the study includes 17 participants—10 male and 7 female 9th-grade students.

Table 1. Participants and their parents' educational background and occupations

		Father's		Mother's	
P	**Sex**	**Education**	**Occupation**	**Education**	**Occupation**
P1	Female	University	Veterinary	Secondary School	Housewife
P2	Male	University	Ex-National Intelligence Organization staff	University	Translator and interpreter
P3	Female	University	Army officer	University	Nurse
P4	Male	University	Lawyer	High School	Housewife
P5	Male	High School	Security guard	High School	Housewife
P6	Male	Master's degree	Health officer	Two-year degree	Nurse
P7	Female	High School	Tradesman	High School	Housewife
P8	Male	Master's degree	Public prosecutor	University	Civil servant
P9	Male	University	Doctor	University	Teacher
P10	Female	Master's degree	Manager	Master's degree	Civil servant
P11	Male	University	Civil servant	University	Civil servant
P12	Male	University	Sergeant major	University	Nurse
P13	Female	University	Gendarmerie	Primary School	Housewife
P14	Male	Two-year degree	Health officer	High School	Housewife
P15	Male	University	Teacher	High School	Housewife
P16	Female	University	Sergeant	University	Housewife
P17	Female	University	Trade	University	Technician

Table 2. Participants' academic performance, type of graduate school, living arrangements, and participated activities

Participant	Exam Result	School Type	Accommodation	Activities
P1	498	Private	Boarder	Volleyball, contests
P2	499	Private	Extern	Badminton
P3	498	Private	Extern	None
P4	500	Private	Extern	None
P5	497	Private	Boarder	English courses
P6	498	Private	Boarder	Chess contests
P7	497	Public	Boarder	Taekwondo
P8	499	Private	Boarder	Guitar, math contests
P9	498	Private	Extern	None
P10	497	Private	Boarder	Guitar, volleyball, chess
P11	498	Private	Extern	None
P12	497	Private	Extern	Basketball, chess
P13	498	Public	Boarder	Taekwondo
P14	497	Public	Extern	Product contest, volleyball
P15	498	Public	Boarder	None
P16	498	Private	Extern	None
P17	498	Private	Extern	Singing

Table 3. Owned cultural items, activities, and awards

Participant	Books	Daily Reading	Free Time with Family	Awards and Certificates
P1	200	1 hour	Cinema	Volleyball, knowledge, composition
P2	250	None	Watching TV	LEGO Robotic medal
P3	400	1 hour	Cinema, theatre, walk	Cambridge English
P4	500+	45 minutes	Watching TV	None
P5	50	1 hour	Having conversations	English
P6	150	30 minutes	Having conversations	Chess
P7	120+	For hours	Watching TV	None
P8	300	Rarely	Conversations, eating	Math
P9	Does not know	None	Walk, chat, games	None
P10	Does not know	Rarely	Planning travels	None
P11	200	20 minutes	Having conversations	None
P12	200	30 minutes	No specific activity	Painting
P13	Does not know	30 minutes	Shopping	None
P14	60	30 minutes	Picnics	Product contest, volleyball
P15	100	30 minutes	Reading, movies	None
P16	40	30 minutes	Picnic, eating, TV	None
P17	100	1 hour	Shopping, eating	None

Table 4. Cultural engagement

Participant	Cinema	Theatre	Owned Artistic Goods	Artistic Engagement
P1	Twice a month	Twice a month	None	Literature, theatre
P2	Twice a month	Six times a year	Guitar	Pencil drawings
P3	Twice a month	Twice a month	None	None
P4	Once a month	None	Paintings, guitar	Music, theatre
P5	Four times a year	None	Paintings	None
P6	Once a month	Rarely	None	Art painting
P7	Rarely	None	Violin	Violin, drawing
P8	Twice a month	Rarely	Reed flute	Reed flute
P9	Twice a year	None	None	None
P10	Twice a year	None	Guitar	Music, theatre
P11	Twice a year	Rarely	None	None
P12	Twice a year	Twice a year	None	None
P13	Once a month	Twice a year	Violin and guitar	Music
P14	Twice a month	Once a year	Paintings	None
P15	None	Rarely	Bağlama	Music
P16	Twice a month	Rarely	Paintings	Drawing
P17	Rarely	None	Violin, bağlama	Music

Table 1 provides information about the familial backgrounds of the participants. Most fathers and mothers are university graduates. Fathers work in professions such as military officers, doctors, teachers, and civil servants. Mothers work as housewives, civil servants, nurses, teachers, and translators.

Table 2 provides an overview of the academic performance, school type, living arrangements, and extracurricular activities of the participants. Participants mostly graduated from private schools, with exam results ranging from 497 to 500. Accommodation types include boarders and externs. Participants were involved in a variety of activities such as volleyball, badminton, English courses, chess contests, taekwondo, guitar, and singing.

Table 3 presents information on participants' cultural items, activities, and awards. The number of books owned by

participants ranges from 40 to over 500. Daily reading habits vary, with some participants reading for up to an hour, while others do not read daily. Free time with family is spent in various ways such as watching TV, having conversations, or engaging in outdoor activities. Awards and certificates earned include recognition in volleyball, English, chess, math, and LEGO robotics, reflecting the interests and achievements among the participants.

Table 4 illustrates the cultural engagement of participants, including their frequency of attending cinema and theatre, as well as their involvement in artistic activities. Participants attend cinema ranging from rarely to twice a month, and theatre from none to twice a month. Artistic goods owned include items such as guitars, violins, paintings, and reed flutes. Artistic engagement spans various activities like literature, theatre, music, drawing, and painting.

Data Collection Tools

As Cresswell (2017) highlights, observation, interviews, and documents are key instruments in qualitative research. For this study, data were collected through interviews and observations from October 2015 to March 2016. Data collection focused on the students' first semester at the school, a critical period for observing their adaptation strategies. Initial interviews with 17 students in October captured their prior experiences and cultural capital characteristics, followed by 20 weeks of classroom observations, one whole day in two weeks. Observations were conducted using a schedule developed by the researchers and reviewed by a professor experienced in qualitative research together with an interview schedule. It captured student interactions, role mechanisms, cultural capital indicators, knowledge from lessons, and engagement. Detailed notes described the setting, activities, and non-verbal communication, aligning with the observation's purpose. A stream of behavior method documented all events throughout the school day. Descriptive notes formed the data's core, with relevant researcher reflections recorded separately as necessary. In March, follow-up interviews with the same students provided insights into their experiences. To develop the semi-structured interview forms, relevant literature was reviewed. The forms included understandable, focused, open-ended questions and sub-questions to ensure comprehensive data collection such as “Can you provide examples of situations where your experiences outside of school have helped you in school?” or “What were your priorities when making friends during your time here at this school?” To avoid missing valuable data, sub-questions were included. Observations were utilized in preparing the second set of interview questions. Expert opinions were received by meeting professors from the fields of sociology and educational sciences. Four experts’ views were received to finalize the forms.

Data Collection Procedure

With approvals from the Ethics Committee and MoNE, the science high school with a diverse student body and minimal differences in exam results was visited. After meeting with the principal and obtaining permission, the administration and teachers were consulted to select a suitable class, balancing boarder and extern students from various cities. Introduced to the class, a demographic form was distributed to gather information on students' backgrounds, cultural capital, and family information. Based on this, 15 students were selected. In October, interviews began, meeting extern students during lunch and free classes and boarders after school. Lessons were observed, identifying two additional students with notable participation, bringing the total to 17 participants. After completing initial interviews, the school was visited biweekly for 10 times for 20 weeks to observe the participants in the classroom and school environment. To see how students experienced the school life in a new setting, observations were extended as long as possible. In March, follow-up interviews with the same 17 students were conducted to understand their experiences. Each interview with students lasted an average of 20 minutes for the first interviews and 30 minutes for the second interviews. In some cases, interviews with extern students were interrupted due to events they needed to attend and were completed later. Apart from this, there were no challenges encountered during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used for the interviews to provide insight into the participants' characteristics at the beginning of the semester when they were new to the environment. Final interviews were also analyzed using content analysis to understand the participants' experiences and thoughts. Observation and field notes were examined to gain a broader understanding of how participants' thoughts were reflected in their practices. Data were organized, texts were read thoroughly, notes were taken, and themes were developed (Cresswell, 2017). Considering Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestions, broad coding was applied to assign codes to data from observations and interviews, while memoing involved making notes or markings as necessary. Pattern coding was used to classify data and identify similarities and differences in expressions, patterns, themes, and relationships. Distilling and ordering helped separate and organize these patterns. Testing summary statements involved expanding generalizations that covered consistent data points, and finally, developing propositions involved formulating these generalizations into structured findings. MAXQDA was used as the CASDAQ to organize data, take notes, and develop themes.

Trustworthiness

Strategies such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, and peer debriefing are suggested to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Ahmed, 2024). Prolonged engagement involved spending twenty weeks intermittently with students in their classes, fostering relationships and familiarity. This approach allowed students to feel at ease sharing their feelings during interviews and behaving naturally during classroom observations. Triangulation was achieved by gathering data through both interviews and observations to address potential issues such as students expressing themselves in a desired manner or observer bias affecting observations. Peer debriefing was implemented throughout the study, from developing forms to analyzing data, by holding meetings with experts related to the hidden curriculum and cultural capital. This aimed to ensure transparency and develop a well-rounded perspective informed by various considerations. By employing these strategies, the study aimed to reach findings that accurately reflect the phenomena studied.

Limitations

The study was conducted as a case study with a limited number of 9th-grade students from a science high school in Ankara, Turkey, which may limit the transferability of the findings.

Efforts were made to enhance transferability by providing a detailed description of the context and participants. This allows for the possibility of considering the findings in similar settings after evaluating the context and participants.

The lack of studies on cultural capital in Turkey presented a challenge in framing and operationalizing the concept. To address this, other researchers were consulted, and Bourdieu's forms of cultural capital were aimed to be adapted to the Turkish context. Participants' explanations of their tastes, dispositions, and experiences were considered to understand their cultural capital. This approach aimed to capture the essence of Bourdieu's concept while considering contextual differences, leading to indicators and emphases that might differ from those in the French context.

Findings

In this section, the findings will be presented in a structured manner to address the research questions mentioned in sequence.

The Manifestation of Cultural Capital Among the Participants

The primary data source for examining the manifestation of the participants' cultural capital consisted of interviews conducted with the participants at the beginning and end of the term. The emerging themes included: tastes shaped by prior experiences, interests, dispositions and impressions formed by previous school experiences.

Tastes and Interests

Tastes shaped by prior experiences and interests were addressed in interviews conducted both at the beginning and the end of the term. The possible influences of these aspects on school experiences, as well as the potential impacts of school experiences on these tastes and interests, were examined. The insights from participants revealed both the advantages and lack of influence of these factors on their school experiences. Some participants noted that their interests and family support positively impacted their school life. For instance, students with interests in astronomy, science, reading, and discussions at home felt these helped them engage better in school activities and discussions, contributing to their self-esteem and comfort in new social environments. Examples include P1, who joined an astronomy club at school by her prior knowledge; P2, who benefited from watching documentaries and exploring topics with their parents; and P7, P8, and P10, who gained critical thinking skills from family discussions.

> *"I am really interested in astronomy, and my family supports this passion. When I found out there was an astronomy club here, I was thrilled. Whenever there is a discussion about astronomy, I can easily join in because I am knowledgeable to a certain extent. I also enjoy reading, which has improved my writing skills; all my teachers commend me for this. I have confidence in my abilities in literature, both reading and writing. Additionally, I follow critiques for theatre, cinema, and concerts, which makes people listen to me when I share my thoughts. These aspects help me." (P1)*
>
> *"I have been interested in science since I was a child. I watch a lot of documentaries on various subjects, including history, although I do not remember much from those, just general knowledge. However, documentaries on astronomy, physics, and math are more memorable and beneficial for me." (P2)*
>
> *"I come from a big family with four sisters. My mother loves reading and would often read aloud to us. Instead of wasting time at home, we talked about books or watched movies together and discussed them. I believe these activities improved my interpretation and critical thinking skills." (P7)*
>
> *"My father is a public prosecutor, and my elder sister studies law. They often discuss various issues at home, which has been beneficial for me. I learn about my social environment, understand why certain laws are made, and how they relate to me, which makes me feel confident. I know what to do when I face problems." (P8)*
>
> *"My parents are avid readers, and we frequently discussed books, which helped me a lot in school." (P10)*

On the other hand, some participants felt their tastes and prior experiences had no significant influence on their school success. They attributed their achievements to their interest in school activities and hard work. For example, P4 believed that only hard work mattered, while P11, and P17 did not see any significant influence from their family background or experiences.

> *"I had no difficulties at school, but it is because of my interest in courses. There is no case I can say I could be comfortable without working on courses." (P4)*
>
> *"I cannot say I had such advantages. My family is not such a family, for example it is not a family interested in science or something like that… I cannot say there are such effects." (P11)*
>
> *"For example, I am not a person who likes reading much, that is why I think I am not good at language and literature. I don't think my life at home and school are so interrelated. If I am successful at school, that is only because of my paying attention to the lectures, there are no other factors affecting it." (P17)*

In the initial interviews, these aspects provided insights into the participants' cultural capital. The second interviews revealed no significant changes in the indicators of students' cultural capital. By the end of the term, participants had experienced new social and cultural opportunities at their new school. In this context, the participants engaged in various activities, both within and outside the school.

When students were asked about the activities that they participated in throughout the term in the second interviews, the findings showed that P1 participated in the school's volleyball team, science Olympiads, and watched theatre plays. She also wrote stories as a hobby. P2 attended school conferences, went to the theatre and cinema with his mother, took archery courses, and learned to play the guitar. P5 was also in the volleyball team and participated in theatre visits but was not interested in the arts. P7 joined the volleyball team, started learning the violin, and developed her drawing skills. P8 took part in computer and physics Olympiads, school visits, and guitar courses. P11 participated in football tournaments, worked on Olympiads, and was a member of the chess club but did not engage in the arts. P12 was involved in an Erasmus Project, Olympiads, scientific activities, volleyball tournaments, and theatre visits. P14 attended school conferences, and P15 participated in school experiments.

Other participants, like P3, P6, P10, P13, and P15 spent time with friends playing games or going outside the campus. Boarder students mainly spent time on campus, developing strategies to utilize school facilities, while extern students like

P9 and P17 spent time at home or felt there were no activities organized at school. Overall, the interviews revealed varied engagement in activities and reading habits, reflecting differences in participants' tastes, interests, and cultural capital. Some actively participated in school and external activities, while others focused more on their coursework.

Dispositions

The concept of capital often suggests tangible assets, but cultural capital includes embodied states such as attitudes or dispositions. Initial interviews provided insights into participants' cultural capital, revealing varied dispositions. Some participants exhibited high self-esteem and comfort in social and school settings. For example, P1, P8 and P14 expressed confidence and ease in participating in activities.

"I enjoy talking and always like to finish what I start. Leadership is a strong aspect of my personality. People value my advice, and empathy is important to me." (P1)

"I am a direct person and don't hesitate to share my thoughts. Whether at school or with my family, I express my ideas easily. I want a large circle of friends and enjoy communicating with everyone." (P8)

"I have been class president seven times, and I am the class president here again. I like being a leader and have confidence in myself. I am straightforward and address problems directly." (P14)

Conversely, other participants, like P5, P6, P9, P10, P13, and P15, shared difficulties due to shyness, stress, or lack of self-confidence, which hindered their participation in social environments.

"People often tell me that I come across as distant. I have always tried to overcome this, but it seems I haven't been successful. I think it's because I am shy and do not feel comfortable around people." (P5)

"In terms of communication, I think I am a quiet person. I feel stressed about the possibility of failure, which puts pressure on me." (P6)

"I am a bit shy and might have trouble expressing myself in front of others." (P9)

"I tend to feel guilty easily. I worry that others might accuse me of being at fault, and I cannot explain my side. My mother has always taken care of most things for me, which might be why I lack self-confidence. I usually go along with others and do not express different ideas." (P10)

"I get stressed easily and know I have self-confidence issues. Even when I achieve something, I still cannot trust myself." (P13)

"I am a shy person. For example, I could not directly communicate with others. From 1st to 5th grade, I was quite passive, which is why I don't like taking responsibility and have not participated in many activities until now." (P15)

In the initial interviews, participants demonstrated a range of attitudes that influenced their experiences and relationships. Participants like P1, P2, P4, P7, P8, P14, P16, and P17 exhibited high self-esteem and comfort in social interactions. Others, such as P5, P6, P9, P10, P13, and P15, described difficulties due to shyness or lack of self-confidence. Participants like P3, P11, and P12 showed adaptability without feeling particularly out of place.

In the final interviews, similar questions were asked to understand how their dispositions affected their experiences. P1 maintained that her ability to express ideas and empathize with others helped her form relationships. P2 highlighted his strong character and helpful nature in overcoming problems and supporting friends. P3 mentioned her ability to understand context and react appropriately, which helped her adapt. P4 emphasized the importance of being direct and serious, which gained him respect.

P5 continued to struggle with shyness, especially in interactions with female peers, while P6 described his tendency to avoid unnecessary stress and speak only when necessary. P7 persisted in her curiosity and determination, which benefited her learning experience. P8 remained straightforward and expressive, breaking some school customs. P9 faced challenges due to his accent but tried to integrate socially.

P10, who initially had trouble expressing herself, showed some improvement but still lacked full self-confidence. P11 preferred to remain silent and conduct his own research rather than ask questions. P12 highlighted his calm demeanor and love for learning, which helped him socially and academically. P13 struggled with stress despite her achievements. P14 enjoyed being social and making others happy, while P15 found it difficult to engage socially and express himself.

P16, accustomed to changing schools, found it easy to talk about her ideas and problems but felt unreciprocated care from others. P17, dissatisfied with the school's social environment, described herself as outspoken and sometimes aggressive, valuing the ability to communicate effectively.

Previous School Experiences

Participants' prior school experiences provide insights into the values they attach to school, revealing aspects of their cultural capital. Positive experiences often involved academic achievements. For example, P1 was happy with the highest grades, P4 with receiving multiple plaques, and P8 with top scores and math Olympiad medals. These experiences highlight a culture of success and appreciation for academic accomplishments.

However, some students also valued non-academic experiences. P2 cherished joining the badminton team after a basketball injury, P7 appreciated teachers who understood her hyperactivity, and P11 enjoyed winning a football tournament. P3, P10, and P16 valued social and environmental aspects of their schools.

Negative experiences varied. P1 experienced bullying but resolved it legally, P2 had to quit basketball due to an injury, and P3 was affected by formal school relationships. Many participants, like P6 and P7, faced issues with school administration or teacher misunderstandings. P9, P12, and P17 had problems with teachers' instruction techniques and rude behavior, while P10 faced ideological conflicts in a religious school environment. Several students, including P8, P13, and P15, found it challenging to adapt to new environments due to school changes. P16 was frustrated by the lower academic levels of her peers.

Observations on Student Behavior Profile

To address the second research question, "What specific characteristics and patterns emerge in the school experiences of the participants?", the behavior profiles of the participants were examined through observations. Those with interest and attitudes valued in the school environment, such as being proactive and social, took on more active roles and participated more in classroom interactions. Conversely, students without these traits preferred more passive roles, focusing on academic

matters and participating only when necessary. Some students ignored certain routines, like speaking without permission or moving around during class, while others adhered to nonexistent rules, such as staying in class during free periods.

P1 demonstrated a proactive and engaged attitude in the classroom, actively participating and taking initiative in various tasks. She assisted teachers, i.e. by starting the smart board, distributing exam papers, and fetching absent students. P1 also actively contributed to classroom discussions, often responding to questions without hesitation and comfortably sharing her ideas with both teachers and classmates. Her willingness to engage and take responsibility was recognized and valued by her teachers.

P2 was generally a quiet student who observed classroom interactions attentively and spoke thoughtfully when he chose to engage. He participated actively in English class, benefiting from his fluency due to his mother's profession as a translator. P2 displayed knowledge across subjects, including sophisticated discussions on Nietzsche, and used the smart board confidently. Although reserved, he was prepared to contribute meaningfully, viewing the classroom as a space to fulfill necessary tasks effectively.

P3 was an engaged student who actively followed lectures and took notes. She typically spoke in class when answering questions and conversed with P7 about lecture-related topics. P3 communicated confidently with teachers, focusing discussions strictly on the subject. Known for her loud intonation, she freely socialized during class, primarily discussing academic topics, demonstrating a focus on understanding the material thoroughly.

P4 maintained a personal distance from teachers and peers but was comfortable discussing course-related issues. He actively participated in academic groups, including the school council, and was involved in class activities, often bringing resources like documentaries related to the curriculum. P4 frequently used the smart board and interacted with teachers during and after class to address his queries. Although he opted out of physical education activities to study, he expressed a strong affinity for school, preferring to spend quality time there even post-exams.

P5, typically reserved and quiet, spent most of his time seated during classes and breaks, often engaged with his mobile phone or sitting silently. He participated minimally, usually sharing answers quietly with close peers like P16, and spoke aloud only when directly questioned by teachers, providing brief and clear responses. P5, along with P15, were the only ones who stood when teachers entered the room. When classes were unexpectedly canceled, he chose to stay in the classroom, reading a book and then waiting for the break time bell.

P6 was a notably attentive student who silently observed classroom interactions and frequently nodded in agreement during lectures. He was particularly engaged in biology, a subject he was passionate about and where the teacher affectionately referred to him as "my son who likes biochemistry." Although curious, P6 rarely participated actively and mostly communicated with his peer, P5, discussing questions related to their coursework. Like P5, he chose to remain in the classroom during canceled sessions, quietly waiting for the bell.

P7, known humorously as "the last time bender" by her math teacher due to her frequent questions, actively engaged in classroom activities and openly expressed her thoughts. She often commented on the pace of lectures, took notes diligently, and socialized comfortably with peers like P3, P9, and P11. Unlike others, P7 felt at ease asking questions without raising her hand and used her free time for studying, drawing, playing games, or listening to music.

P8 frequently rested his head on his desk during class, either napping or playing games on his tablet, yet actively socialized with friends during breaks. In class, he unhesitatingly responded to questions even when seemingly disengaged, often earning praise such as "well done" from teachers. Unlike his peers, P8 often sat cross-legged and interacted directly with teachers, including querying a lower-than-expected exam grade, displaying a casual demeanor that eschewed conventional classroom norms.

Initially sociable, P9 became more reserved over time, often studying alone. He showed active participation in math but appeared disinterested in other subjects, frequently questioning how activities would affect his grades. His interactions mainly focused on academic performance, and he exhibited signs of low self-confidence, especially when hesitant to present group work despite its success.

P10 was notably proactive in her class participation, often answering questions and commenting without waiting for teacher permission, contrasting with the more reserved behavior of her peers. Initially solitary, she became more socially engaged over time, developing polite interactions with classmates, such as asking permission to use an empty chair. Like P7, P10 actively intervened in lectures to clarify her understanding, demonstrating a strong focus on the course content and a confident approach to classroom interactions.

P11, while academically successful, was generally passive during classes, only participating when directly questioned by teachers. His responses were quiet and somewhat introverted, often standing when speaking despite no such requirement. However, he engaged actively with peers like P2, P7, P8, and P9, discussing course-related topics and collaborating on problem-solving. P11 was notably more active in religious culture and moral knowledge classes, leveraging his knowledge of religion and Persian language to contribute effectively, demonstrating an ability to seek assistance from friends or teachers when needed.

P12 was an attentive student who consistently focused on the teacher's lectures, often taking notes and solving problems during class. Positioned at the front, he engaged minimally, speaking only when raising his hand for permission to contribute. While he occasionally collaborated with a peer to solve problems, P12 primarily observed and listened. Despite his interest and participation, he sometimes struggled to articulate his thoughts, as seen when he could not complete a statement, which another student then expressed, acknowledging “I meant the same thing, but I could not explain it.”.

P13 was an attentive student who engaged deeply with lectures and took meticulous notes, but her participation extended beyond academics. She actively socialized with classmates during and between classes, discussing not only course-related topics but also engaging in daily conversations and humor. P13 also showed empathy, comforting friends in distress. She interacted confidently with teachers, once challenging a teacher's decision not to review a missed topic due to a school-organized event, showing advocacy for herself and her peers. Additionally, in literature classes, she contributed her self-acquired knowledge, earning praise from her teacher.

As class president, P14 displayed an active and influential role within the classroom. He facilitated administrative tasks like counting students for attendance and setting up the smart board, often interacting closely and confidently with both teachers and peers. He maintained a casual rapport with teachers, humorously commenting on courses, and actively engaged with all classmates, though he seldom participated deeply in academic activities. Instead, P14 often moved around the room, initiating various discussions. During canceled classes, he suggested leisure activities, balancing his academic responsibilities with enjoying his school experience.

P15 was described as "like mafia" by P17 not for being intimidating but due to his silent, observant nature. He mostly kept to himself, sitting quietly, either studying or observing during classes and breaks. He followed lessons attentively but spoke only when called upon, standing out by always standing when teachers entered, a gesture of respect not commonly shared by his peers. P15 struggled at times to verbally express his thoughts, often using gestures to compensate. He stayed in school even after exams, valuing the environment.

P16 was notably the most energetic student in her class, frequently seen walking around during class and talking to friends, displaying difficulty in maintaining focus on lectures. She openly communicated with teachers, at times expressing her concerns about the pace of coursework. Despite active participation, P16 often voiced dissatisfaction with her academic performance, labeling herself as one of the least successful students. She struggled with the pressure of constant studying, lamenting the lack of enjoyment in the present due to future-focused education. Her interest in painting was overshadowed by her academic commitments, leading to feelings of guilt when not studying.

P17 was the most outspoken student in her class, actively engaging and frequently asking questions without waiting for permission, often engaging directly with teachers. She was acutely aware of classroom dynamics, occasionally using humor to challenge them, such as questioning a teacher's use of laboratory equipment or responding sarcastically to a teacher's query about attentiveness. P17 was highly social, easily conversing with peers, though sometimes her frankness led to confrontations. She voiced concerns about the intense study culture, feeling it encroached on leisure time. Despite this, she respected school rules, exemplified by her request to leave the classroom at a break bell during an ongoing lesson.

Participants' Interpretation of School Life Within the Context of The Hidden Curriculum

Besides the aspects presented, the study also aimed to investigate the hidden curriculum as perceived and experienced by the participants in the school where the data were collected. The school provided various opportunities for students, sometimes highlighting them clearly and other times not. To understand how students recognized or overlooked these opportunities, both functionalist and Neo-Marxist perspectives were considered during data collection and analysis. Additionally, students brought pre-existing thoughts related to their cultural capital that influenced their interpretation of hidden curriculum. In this context, when examining the participants' interpretations of the hidden curriculum to answer the third research question, five themes emerged. These include the use of equipment and resources and physical spaces at the school, the perceived image of the school, participation processes, and relationships with teachers.

Use of Equipment and Resources

The use of equipment and resources at the school was explored to understand how students' cultural capital influenced their engagement with these resources. The school provided numerous physical resources, but there was no direct guidance on their use. This led to a disparity where students who actively used these resources benefited, while others did not.

Participants like P1, P2, P4, P8, P11, and P14 used the smart board effectively. P1, the only female participant who used it, was interested in technology and took initiative. P2 noted that social factors influenced the use of such facilities, with some students feeling shy. P4 mentioned having no fear of breaking the equipment, which made him comfortable using it.

> *"Some of our friends feel shy and prefer to stay in the background when we gather around the smart board. But we try to use the facilities to quickly find answers to our questions before we forget them." (P2)*
>
> *"I am not worried about breaking the smart board because it can always be reset. This makes me comfortable using it, and teachers often ask me to set it up for them." (P4)*

In contrast, participants like P7, P9, and P12 saw no value in using the smart board, citing reasons like frequent breakdowns or lack of interest.

> *"I think the smart board is unnecessary. It always breaks down, and I do not see any purpose in using it." (P7)*

The use of other equipment varied as well. P5, P6, and P8 used sports materials frequently due to their interest in sports. P7, P8, and P13 used musical instruments in the music room to develop their skills. However, participants mentioned that laboratory equipment should be used only under teacher supervision, limiting their use, while P1 expressed they were somewhat available for student use.

> *"I think we are limited in using the laboratories. We can only go there during biology class and at the teacher's initiative. There are laboratories available, but no one uses them." (P10)*
>
> *"Some teachers take us to the labs, which students can use to a certain extent. While we cannot perform experiments on our own, we can still utilize the equipment. Students preparing for olympiads typically use the labs." (P1)*

Use of Physical Spaces at The School

The study investigated how participants used the numerous physical spaces available at their school. The class, characterized as hardworking, saw some students choosing to stay in the classroom during breaks to study. Reasons varied: P2 felt comfortable in his classroom spot, P4 did not want to risk being marked absent, and P6 had no alternative activities. P9 realized he rarely left the classroom, while P10 and P13 felt compelled to study due to the class's academic atmosphere. P11 was unsure why he stayed, and P15 found breaks too short to be productive.

> *"Ultimately, it is still a class. That's why I do not leave the classroom. The teacher might come in and take attendance. Some friends leave in such cases, but I stay." (P4)*
>
> *"I would prefer to go outside if I had something to do, but since I do not, I stay in the classroom during breaks." (P6)*
>
> *"I have realized that I have not left the classroom at all. I do not really go outside. I noticed this when you asked. Sometimes I go to the dormitory after school, but I mostly stay in the classroom. I have only just realized it now." (P9)*

In contrast, P8, P14, and P16 used breaks to relax or socialize. P8 frequently left the classroom to visit others, P14 took regular breaks, and P16 stepped out to cool off and chat with friends.

"I think I am the student who leaves the classroom the most. There is a very serious study atmosphere, and people study even during breaks. I do not support this. I leave the classroom, visit other classes, and talk to people." (P8)

"Sometimes it gets so hot in the classroom. Even if no one joins me, I still leave the class. When there is no teacher, I go out, meet friends, and chat with them." (P16)

During classes, participants had different attitudes towards moving around. P3, P7, P14, and P16 felt comfortable doing so, with P16 needing to move due to her energetic nature. Others, like P4, P12, and P15, preferred to stay seated, with P4 believing it was disruptive to the teacher.

"I am a very energetic person. Even when I sit, I at least shake my foot. Sitting still is difficult for me, and I do not see any problem with moving around during class." (P16)

"In my view, it is not a good idea. If I were the teacher and someone moved around the classroom to talk to a friend or for any other reason, it would be distracting. I would expect everyone to sit and listen." (P4)

The library was regularly used only by P12 for its quietness. The gym was popular among participants, particularly P1, P2, P8, P11, P12, and P14. P4 used the social facility for conferences. P3 and P17 often stayed by a warm radiator in the corridor, with P17 feeling uncomfortable due to senior students dominating many spaces.

The Perceived Image of The School

Participants' perceptions of the school encompassed six main topics: scientific events, socialization, discipline, physical conditions, quality education, and school customs.

Most participants were satisfied with the school's conditions. P1 effectively used the school's facilities and was happy there. P2, P4, P12, and P15 appreciated the scientific opportunities provided, like conferences by researchers. P7 and others praised the social environment for its tolerance and respect, though P17 felt it was a waste of time compared to outside activities.

"Fortunately, the school administration brings in researchers from various universities to give us conferences. These are beneficial for us since we want to pursue careers in these fields in the future." (P2)

"Everyone here has a certain level of tolerance. People listen to each other's ideas, even if they do not agree. They are patient and willing to listen." (P7)

"I am really bored here. I feel like I am wasting my time. There are so many things to do and people to meet outside of school. I could be exploring new places and meeting new people, but instead, I am just sitting here, wasting time." (P17)

Participants had mixed opinions about the physical conditions. P5 appreciated the green campus and quiet environment, while others, like P6 and P8, criticized the dormitories and isolation from the city. P10 highlighted issues with the school's infrastructure and resource allocation.

"I have no complaints about the physical conditions of my school. Sure, it is a bit old, but I do not mind. It has a green campus and its own forest. I like that we can walk around and escape the city's noise." (P5)

"Firstly, our classroom should not be in the basement. I do not think the school's physical conditions are adequate. I believe the administration is not fully utilizing its financial resources. There are photocopy machines here, but teachers ask extern students to make copies. Is there no toner available?" (P10)

Discipline was another area of interest. Participants like P11 noted the lack of strict rules compared to previous schools, which he saw as a positive aspect. The security staff, however, viewed this as a cause of discipline problems.

"Compared to my old school, where there were many rules and teachers closely monitored us, this place is much more relaxed." (P11)

Quality education was generally praised by participants such as P4, P5, and P9, who felt the school provided excellent teaching. In contrast, P10 and P13 had concerns about insufficient use of facilities and a curriculum that was too technical and lacked practical elements.

"It is like we are the top students in Turkey, and they are the best teachers." (P5)

"When I met the teachers and saw their teaching methods, I thought to myself, 'I am in the right place.'" (P9)

School customs, developed over decades, were another aspect of the hidden curriculum. While P13 enjoyed these traditions, P8 and P17 felt they sometimes limited their access to facilities in advantage of senior students.

"There is a strong culture here that has been developed over time. I enjoy being part of it and living it." (P13)

Participation Processes

Some participants, like P1, P2, and P14, were highly active and engaged in various activities. P1 expressed her desire to participate and share her thoughts actively. P2 focused on positive experiences and stayed active in events that promoted personal development. P17 participated only when events directly affected her, feeling otherwise overlooked by the teachers.

"I try to participate in as many activities as possible and express my thoughts openly. If I believe in something, I stand by it. I strive not to be passive." (P1)

"I do not like constantly talking about problems. When friends complain, I usually do not join in. However, if there are opportunities for growth, I try to be active and engage with others to hear their perspectives." (P2)

"The school mainly belongs to the extern students since they live here. I do not really care… I feel that teachers often do not even know our names. But when there is an issue that affects me, I make sure to voice my reaction." (P17)

Participants like P3, P10, and P16 initiated social activities and encouraged others to join. P3 described herself as the one who often suggested and organized activities. Conversely, P4, P7, and P9 prioritized academic pursuits, with P4 stating that he was most active in course-related activities.

"My participation is mostly related to academic subjects. I ask questions, discuss topics, and share my research. It is mainly about those things." (P4)

P8 and P14 were more concerned with addressing issues within the school, often engaging with the administration to improve school conditions. P8 was content with his grades and more interested in projects that could enhance the school environment.

"I am average in all my courses and content with my grades. I do not focus too much on them. I believe I am doing well enough. I am more interested in projects that

improve the school, and I often share my ideas, which my friends usually support." (P8)

The last group included participants like P5, P6, P11, P12, P13, and P15, who were reluctant to participate in social processes and focused primarily on passing their courses. P11, for example, participated in activities only when a teacher was involved, showing little interest in peer-led discussions.

"Discussions do not really interest me, so I tend to avoid them. If there is a teacher present, I might participate, but I generally do not engage in discussions among friends. They do not concern me much." (P11)

Relationships with Teachers

Participants developed varied relationships with their teachers, influenced by their perceptions of teachers' roles. Some saw teachers primarily as authority figures who delivered lectures, while others sought more personal connections or felt comfortable providing feedback.

Participants like P6, P8, P9, P11, P12, P16, and P17 maintained distant relationships, viewing teachers mainly as authority figures responsible for instruction. P11 respected teachers for their role in grading, and P17 felt it was sufficient for teachers to teach well without needing a personal connection. P12 simply wanted teachers to be polite without seeking friendship. P16 desired closer relationships but felt the current teachers were less friendly than her previous ones.

"In the end, they are superior to me, and they determine the grades. Naturally, I have respect for them." (P11)

"I do not mind having good relationships with teachers. For me, it is enough that they teach well. It does not matter if we are close or not." (P17)

"As long as they are not rude, I think there is no need to be friends. Being polite is enough." (P12)

Participants like P5, P14, and P15 respected teachers for their success and contributions to the school. P5 believed the school had the best teachers, and P15 felt that understanding and respecting teachers enhanced his appreciation of the school.

"This is the best school in Turkey, and they have the best teachers. I am aware of that, and I keep it in mind in my relationships with them." (P5)

"Teachers are what make this school. The better I understand and acknowledge them, the more I appreciate the school." (P15)

Participants such as P2, P3, P4, and P13 described their relationships with teachers as neutral but positive. They felt respected and supported by their teachers and believed that these good relationships were mutual. P3, for instance, believed that teachers liked and understood him, fostering a positive rapport.

"As teachers, they deserve respect. But I think we have developed good relationships. I believe they like me, and I like them. Or at least, I think they do. They act with an understanding and their behavior towards me is positive." (P3)

P7 and P10 viewed their relationships with teachers as friendships. P10 felt close to most of his teachers, acknowledging that while not all were equally friendly, the majority were approachable.

"In general, I think the main type of relationship with teachers is friendship. Of course, there are a few who are not as close, but that is normal. Overall, I feel close to them." (P10)

P1 felt comfortable enough to criticize teachers, when necessary, especially in math classes. She recounted instances where she corrected teachers' mistakes, leading to arguments but ultimately improving understanding. Despite potential conflicts, P1 insisted on voicing her beliefs, shaping her relationships with teachers.

"Especially in math classes, teachers sometimes make mistakes. It is normal, anyone can make errors. When I try to correct them, they do not always believe me. We sometimes argue about it, and it stresses me out. I do not want to be disrespectful, but when they realize the mistake, they correct it." (P1)

Discussion

It is discussed that cultural capital impacts school experiences, a finding consistent with this study (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Tan et al., 2019). Students with tastes and interests aligned with school activities adapted more easily and felt comfortable in the new environment. These students demonstrated communication skills, critical thinking, and effective language use, which helped them meet school expectations. This observation aligns with the idea of that students need to learn certain aspects of school life to navigate it successfully (Dueggeli et al., 2021; Jackson, 1966).

Conversely, students lacking these tastes and interests viewed school primarily as a place to complete tasks and move on. Participants in the study fell into three categories: those who benefited from their tastes and experiences, those who developed strategies to meet expectations despite lacking initial advantages, and those who struggled due to a mismatch between their cultural capital and the school's culture. This categorization supports DiMaggio's (1982) assertion that cultural capital can confer advantages in educational settings and Lamont et al.'s (2014) findings on the role of cultural capital in schooling.

Bourdieu (1984) suggests a relation between social positions and dispositions, implying that dispositions can explain how individuals are positioned within a social setting and how their experiences vary. Participants with social dispositions (i.e. talkative, self-confident) developed better relationships and enjoyed school opportunities. These students exhibited linguistic competence aligning with Bernstein's (2000) idea of the correspondence between language use and social environment dynamics. In contrast, students who described themselves as distant, silent, or shy, or who experienced fear and stress, faced limitations due to their cultural capital, reflecting Lamont and Small's (2008) concept of symbolic boundaries.

The study revealed that students often connected school experiences with success, particularly academic achievements. Most participants recalled rewards and good exam results as their positive memories, indicating an emphasis on success in their social environments. This observation aligns with Cerit's (2006) discussion on the potential dangers of centering educational experiences solely on academic achievements which might limit broader knowledge acquisition.

Observations and final interviews showed that most participants maintained their initial attitudes throughout the study. Only four participants changed their perceptions. One participant felt embarrassed about his accent, highlighting Bernstein's (2000) and Bourdieu's (1984) discussions on the impact of language use on social inclusion. Two extern students found the school lacking in social interactions, and one participant developed better self-expression skills,

demonstrating the influence of school opportunities on personal development.

To explore the hidden curriculum in the school where data was collected, the setting was described in the method part. The school, aligned with the missions for science high schools, aimed to enhance learning opportunities through its physical and social environment, reflecting a functionalist approach. This approach aims to help students acquire specific norms, values, and skills (Cotton et al., 2013; Çubukçu, 2012; Kiss et al., 2013; Skelton, 1997; Winter & Cotton, 2012), encouraging research abilities and scientific development (MoNE, 1999). However, the hidden curriculum includes "unofficial expectations," "unintended learning outcomes," or "implicit messages," and is also "created by the students" (Portelli, 1993). The study found that students' creation and learning from nonacademic experiences varied according to their cultural capital (Yüksel, 2002).

Students' perceptions of the hidden curriculum were grouped into five themes: equipment and resources, use of physical spaces, image of the school, participation processes, and relationships with teachers. Differences in interacting with school equipment were observed; some students used the equipment comfortably and confidently, while others avoided it due to fear of breaking it or seeing it as unnecessary. Familiarity with such materials and how to use them influenced these behaviors, with students' tastes and dispositions supporting effective use of opportunities (Arun, 2014).

In terms of physical space, some students preferred staying in the classroom, influenced by the intense studying environment. Some students left the classroom to socialize, while others stayed due to a lack of alternative activities. These behaviors reflected how students perceived their social surroundings and created implicit rules (Lamont & Small, 2008; Lynch, 1989). The varied use of space indicated that students with tastes and perceptions aligned with the school environment explored more than those who viewed school as merely a place to complete tasks.

The perceived image of the school also provided insights into the hidden curriculum. While the school's mission aimed to prepare students for scientific careers, most participants viewed the institution primarily as a place to study and prepare for exams, rather than as an institution aimed at nurturing scientists, which is the intended purpose of science high schools (MoNE, 1999). Students emphasized academic goals and social aspects in their descriptions of the school, suggesting that the primary focus for most students is on exam preparation rather than on fostering scientific research and development. This reflects a discrepancy between the schools' objectives and the students' perceptions.

The findings also indicated a difference in the experiences of boarder students compared to extern students. Extern students generally felt disconnected from the school environment. They often described the school as a place where they were required to study to achieve success. This sense of alienation suggests that extern students might feel like outsiders within the school setting, creating a hidden curriculum that negatively impacts their experience.

In contrast, boarder students often had more positive perceptions of the school. They viewed it as a supportive environment that reminded them of home, where they received care and could build meaningful relationships. Only one boarder student expressed a negative view, which indicates a broader acceptance and comfort within the school environment among boarder students.

Regarding participation, despite similar environments and interactions, students showed varying levels of involvement. Most engaged in course-related activities, but some took active roles in decision-making and problem-solving, reflecting strategies to cope with complications and create a comforting hidden curriculum (Snyder, 1971; Rose, 1990).

Relationships with teachers also varied, with students perceiving teachers as authorities, experts, friends, or simply as professionals doing their job. These perceptions influenced how students interacted with teachers and positioned themselves within the school. Students who saw teachers as authorities tended to follow instructions, while those viewing teachers as experts sought to benefit from their knowledge. Friendlier relationships allowed students to communicate openly, while viewing teachers as professionals led to neutral, task-focused interactions. One participant noted that teachers could make mistakes, which allowed her to discuss errors comfortably.

In conclusion, the study found that students' cultural capital and perceptions of the hidden curriculum changed their practices and experiences in school. These perceptions shaped how they interacted with the school's social and material opportunities, highlighting the impact of cultural capital on their school experiences.

Implications

The findings of the study highlight several implications related to cultural capital, hidden curriculum, boarding schools, and science high schools. First, cultural capital plays a significant role in students' experiences. The study reveals that students whose habitus and cultural capital do not align with the school's social environment may feel exclusion, leading to inertia. This issue was emphasized by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), who discussed the difference between implicit and explicit pedagogy, noting that the legitimate way to develop habitus and cultural capital is through familiarity with the context rather than strategic inculcation. Yang (2014) adds that explicit pedagogy is also crucial, as students need to develop a habitus that addresses expected norms. Educators, particularly teachers, need to create inclusive strategies to accommodate these students, balancing reason and context without ignoring students' realities.

Secondly, the hidden curriculum affects how students engage with school resources and relationships. Equal opportunities in social and material aspects do not guarantee equal access. The study found that students used equipment, physical spaces, and developed relationships with teachers differently, with some being active participants and others showing inertia. To foster active participation, educators need to encourage students to engage with school dynamics beyond academic goals, promoting active involvement over passive reception.

Thirdly, the study reveals differences between boarder and extern students' experiences. Boarder students may feel a sense of belonging, while extern students may feel isolated, leading them to avoid using facilities and participating in activities. This supports the argument that boarding schools need to develop an inclusive culture for extern students. Informing families about school activities and increasing the number of such events can encourage extern students to participate more meaningfully.

Fourthly, science high schools are not mainly perceived as institutions for developing scientific research abilities among the participants, despite this being their intended purpose (MoNE, 1999). Instead, the students have described the school as having excellent academic opportunities and good teachers for exam preparation. This might be attributed to the students having recently completed the high school entrance exam. Considering that the participants are 9th-grade students, it is possible that their approaches may change over time as they become more immersed in the school culture. At this point, studies examining the perceptions of science high school students about these types of schools could contribute to the literature.

As the reader might have noticed, the data in this study dates to 2016. It is discussed that neo-conservative policies in Turkey have led to the emergence of a dual education system in the educational practices, one with a religious orientation and the other secular (Güven, 2019). Considering the founding purposes of science high schools (MoNE, 1999), these schools can be seen as significant institutions in a country where studies indicate that the nature of science is not adequately understood in formal education (Akçay & Türkmen, 2023; Kaya & Erduran, 2016). When examining studies on these institutions in Turkey conducted after the data collection process for this study, it is seen that these schools are associated with high expectations, being successful schools, admitting students through exams, emphasizing student success, and valuing students' opinions (Gürer, 2022). Furthermore, there are studies indicating that these schools also provide social capital for their teachers in addition to their students (Polatcan, 2017). However, it is seen that aspects such as the hidden curriculum, school culture, and operational processes of these schools have not been sufficiently studied. After the completion of data collection for this study, Şalcı's (2021) study stands out as a work that addresses these dimensions, but it focuses on project Anatolian Imam Hatip high schools with science programs. Additionally, Koyuncu and Uçar's (2024) study similarly conducted an investigation into the hidden curriculum at Anatolian Imam Hatip high schools.

Considering the meta-synthesis conducted by Öztürk and Taşpınar (2021), it highlights that hidden curriculum relates to how teachers establish relationships with their students, what is reproduced in students' experiences, the impact of these choices on instilling various values, attitudes, and skills, how these choices shape students' behaviors, how class and school management are conducted, and how this creates a particular school culture related to the school's physical, content, regulatory, and implementation aspects. In this context, as the study shows, addressing the hidden curriculum in science high schools by considering the cultural capital of the students entering these environments can contribute to changing the students' experiences in ways that align more closely with the institution's objectives and provide a more equitable approach.

As a final point, as discussed in the limitations part, there are insufficient studies in Turkey to provide a comprehensive perspective on what constitutes the content of cultural capital. Therefore, more studies are needed that consider the demographics of households, parents, and children, along with the historical and sociological aspects of the term in the Turkish context. This highlights the importance of understanding the unique dynamics in Turkey and developing tools to investigate related issues effectively.

Author Contributions

This study is derived from the first author's master's thesis, prepared under the supervision of the second author, and was presented as an oral paper at the 7th International Conference on Critical Education, held in Athens from June 28 to July 2, 2017.

Ethical Declaration

This study was conducted with the approval of the Middle East Technical University Applied Research Ethics Center, Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol No. 2015-EGT-126), obtained at the meeting held on 30.09.2015.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with any institution or individual related to this study.

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