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SOCIAL PARTICIPATION SKILLS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRESERVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS: EXPERIENCES, PROBLEMS, AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

*HABILIDADES DE PARTICIPAÇÃO SOCIAL NA PERSPECTIVA DE
FUTUROS PROFESSORES DE ESTUDOS SOCIAIS: EXPERIÊN-
CIAS, PROBLEMAS E SOLUÇÕES SUGERIDAS*

*HABILIDADES DE PARTICIPACIÓN SOCIAL DESDE LA
PERSPECTIVA DE LOS FUTUROS PROFESORES DE CIENCIAS
SOCIALES: EXPERIENCIAS, PROBLEMAS Y SOLUCIONES
SUGERIDAS*

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the experiences of preservice social studies teachers regarding social participation skills. the challenges they encounter. and their solution proposals. Conducted through a phenomenological qualitative design. the research involved 20 preservice teachers (13 females. 7 males) enrolled in the 4th year of the Social Studies Teaching Program at Firat University during the 2024–2025 academic year. Using maximum variation sampling. data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed via content analysis with qualitative data software. Findings revealed that participants defined social participation as engaging in social groups. acting. sharing ideas and emotions. and being aware of societal issues. Analysis showed diverse conceptualizations of participation. Results indicated that individuals demonstrating confidence. tolerance. communication. cooperation. creativity. and social sensitivity exhibit strong participation skills. The study recommends implementing both in-school and extracurricular activities and social responsibility projects to cultivate socially conscious and participatory individuals.

KEYWORDS: Skills. Social participation skills. Social studies education. Preservice social studies teachers.

RESUMO: Este estudo investiga as experiências de futuros professores de estudos sociais em relação às habilidades de participação social, os desafios que eles encontram e suas propostas de solução. Conduzida por meio de um delineamento qualitativo fenomenológico, a pesquisa envolveu 20 futuros professores (13 mulheres e 7 homens) matriculados no 4º ano do Programa de Ensino de Estudos Sociais da Universidade Firat durante o ano acadêmico de 2024–2025. Usando amostragem de variação máxima, os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas e analisados por meio de análise de conteúdo com software de dados qualitativos. Os resultados revelaram que os participantes definiram participação social como engajamento em grupos sociais, atuação, compartilhamento de ideias e emoções e consciência de questões sociais. A análise mostrou diversas conceituações de participação. Os resultados indicaram que indivíduos que demonstram confiança, tolerância, comunicação, cooperação, criatividade e sensibilidade social exibem fortes habilidades de participação. O estudo recomenda a implementação de atividades escolares e extracurriculares e projetos de responsabilidade social para cultivar indivíduos socialmente conscientes e participativos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Habilidades. Habilidades de participação social. Educação em estudos sociais. Futuros professores de estudos sociais.

RESUMEN: Este estudio investiga las experiencias de los profesores de ciencias sociales en formación en relación con las habilidades de participación social, los retos a los que se enfrentan y sus propuestas de solución. Realizada mediante un diseño cualitativo fenomenológico, la investigación contó con la participación de 20 profesores en formación (13 mujeres y 7 hombres) matriculados en el cuarto año del Programa de Enseñanza de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Firat durante el curso académico 2024-2025. Utilizando un muestreo de máxima variación, los datos se recopilaron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas y se analizaron mediante análisis de contenido con software de datos cualitativos. Los resultados revelaron que los participantes definían la participación social como la implicación en grupos sociales, la acción, el intercambio de ideas y emociones, y la conciencia de los problemas sociales. El análisis mostró diversas conceptualizaciones de la participación. Los resultados indicaron que las personas que demuestran confianza, tolerancia, comunicación, cooperación, creatividad y sensibilidad social exhiben fuertes habilidades de participación. El estudio recomienda implementar actividades tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela y proyectos de responsabilidad social para cultivar individuos socialmente conscientes y participativos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Habilidades. Habilidades de participación social. Educación en ciencias sociales. Profesores de ciencias sociales en formación.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, social, political, cultural, and economic fields go through rapid changes and transformations that cause not only alterations in our social life but also in the field of education, the basis of our social life (Genç & Eryaman, 2007). The effects of these changes on the education system include the prioritisation of students, the preparation of activities suitable for individual differences, the acquisition of knowledge, values and skills, and their use in daily life (Erdoğan, 2019).

Educational activities aim to equip students with knowledge, values, and skills (Alabaş & Kaymakçı, 2019). Skill is defined as *“the ability to do a task, the ability to accomplish a task and complete a process in accordance with the purpose depending on one’s predisposition and learning, dexterity, and the body’s predisposition to difficult exercises”* (Turkish Language Association [TLA], 2025), the individual’s physical predisposition to a condition or task, or the ability to perform his/her duties and responsibilities with the competencies developed during the teaching process (Bolat, 2022). Skill, meaning dexterity, talent, and ability, lies at the heart of educational and training activities. Skill teaching, holding a significant place today, is effective in the process of bringing up conscious individuals who are productive and can find solutions to the challenges they come across. One of these skills is social participation skill, as well (Alabaş & Kaymakçı, 2019).

Social participation is defined as engagement in social life (Adler & Goggin, 2005), actions of individuals for the benefit of society and a sense of responsibility towards other individuals (Gallant et al., 2010), sharing individual resources socially (Ülgen, 2012), active involvement of the individual in social life, and self-development (Samancı et al., 2018) for individuals to help improve conditions for others or to develop the future of society.

Social participation refers to *“the process of moving from generating ideas to action by joining a social group to address their needs, as well as students’ knowledge about issues that affect both themselves and their immediate environment”* (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2024a). Social participation is the ability of individuals to be actively involved in social life and demonstrate to others in society that they exist. Membership in a group, interaction with a person, group, and institution, service in social institutions, benefits from these institutions, and efforts to be useful to society are key elements in social participation (Alabaş & Kaymakçı, 2019).

This is a significant skill that aims to make individuals get along with their environment and society, to be beneficial to society from different perspectives, and to make use of social services (Alabaş & Kaymakçı, 2019), to enable children to engage in cultural, social, artistic, and sportive activities at school and in social life and to build their self-confidence and responsibilities accordingly (Samancı et al., 2018), and to contribute to shaping the future of

society, improving social relations, and contributing to social life (Aktepe & Eren, 2023). Social participation skill consists of *“the integrated skills of questioning, establishing social contact, maintaining group dynamics, generating ideas, negotiating, and transforming ideas into action”* (MoNE, 2024a). This skill involves the processes by which individuals engage in learning activities and join in relationships with the social environment, such as family, relatives, peers, and neighbours (Ocakçı & Samancı, 2018; Samancı et al., 2018). Because people need to communicate throughout their lives (Kahveci & Şentürk, 2021).

Social participation skill lies at the heart of students’ ability to generate solutions to social problems and to contribute to society by utilising their problem-solving and decision-making skills effectively (Griffith & Hill, 2008). Therefore, it is important that social participation involves activities to build critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Moreover, certain factors should be considered for social participation to be effective.

The students can help people in need, attend clean-up days, attend court sessions and city council meetings, take part in long-term projects in institutions such as hospitals and charities, take part in short-term projects and projects related to charities, create brochures to promote important issues in the society such as preservation of historical buildings and waste disposal, carry out activities related to human rights, and engage in activities to protect the environment in order to build social participation skills (Ludlow, 1993).

Social participation skill is one of the key skills that are effective in an individual’s gaining a place in society, improving in social life, and being happy. Social participation takes place first in the family. It is important to bring up children in the family with a sense of democracy that allows them to participate and to be free, equal, fair, and valued, and to reinforce this culture of democracy and promote social participation among students at school (Aktepe & Eren, 2023).

The social studies course, *“aiming at a citizenship mentality focused on active involvement in the democratic process as the main objective”* in our education system, holds an important place during the socialisation process of the child. Social participation skill is one of the key skills that is tried to be taught to students in the social studies course (Doğanay, 2008), adopting an interdisciplinary approach aiming to raise effective citizens. It is important to allow students to actively engage in classroom activities that encourage them to think critically in the social studies course. Accordingly, students endeavour to reflect on what they have learned, ask questions about things they are curious about, share their ideas, and engage in discourse about social issues.

Moreover, social participation is an essential tool to effectively raise students as citizens, to think critically and creatively, and to make decisions based on information from a variety of sources. Here, the social studies course and social participation skill are critically important for students to understand and contribute to the society in which they live (Griffith

& Hill, 2008). Therefore, social participation skill should be taught to students. While the curriculum of the social studies course is important for acquiring social participation by students, social studies teachers also assume an important responsibility (Öğdür & Uzunöz, 2023).

The Turkish Century Education Model identifies “*seventeen field skills that have strong correlations with twenty-first century skills, considering national and international literature, the specific structure of the field, and the requirements of the age under the social sciences field skills,*” and one of these skills is social participation (MoNE, 2024a). The social participation skill, aimed to be taught to students through the 2024 curriculum of the social studies course, is included in the 4th grade in the learning area of living together and our living democracy, in the 5th grade in the learning area of living together, our home is the world, and our living democracy, and in the 6th and 7th grades in the learning area of living together (MoNE, 2024b). The 2018 curriculum of the social studies course provides students with social participation skills in the learning area of active citizenship in the 4th grade and in the learning area of individual and society and active citizenship in the 5th grade (MoNE, 2018).

The curriculum aims to connect with daily life and enable students to acquire skills by experiencing them in real life (MoNE, 2024b). Accordingly, it could be asserted that social participation skill is one of the important skills aimed at teaching students in the curriculum of the social studies course. Moreover, it is critically important to teach social participation skill, which is individually and socially beneficial, to students from an early age. In this sense, it is important to determine the experiences of future teachers of social studies on social participation skill, the problems they have gone through, and their suggestions for solutions.

The aim of this study is to determine the experiences of preservice social studies teachers on social participation skill, the problems they have gone through and their suggestions for solutions from their perspectives. Under the framework of this purpose, the following sub-problems of the study were identified:

1. How do preservice social studies teachers define social participation skill?
2. What are the views of preservice social studies teachers on the significance of social participation skill?
3. What are the views of preservice social studies teachers on the characteristics of an individual with social participation skill?
4. What are the views of preservice social studies teachers on which skills social participation skill is effective in teaching?
5. What are the views of preservice social studies teachers on the experiences related to social participation skill?
6. What are the views of preservice social studies teachers on the problems they experienced during the social participation process?

7. What are the suggestions of preservice social studies teachers for acquiring social participation skill?

METHOD

Design of the Study

In this study, aiming to determine the experiences of preservice social studies teachers on social participation skill, the problems they have gone through, and their suggestions for solutions from their perspectives, qualitative research method was used. Qualitative research is a method that is used in many disciplines, especially in social sciences and tries to understand social events, people's behaviours, and the origins of these behaviours (Güler et al., 2015).

Since the study aims to determine the experiences of preservice social studies teachers on social participation skill, the problems they have gone through and their suggestions for solutions from their perspectives, phenomenological design was preferred. The phenomenological design is a design that draws common meanings about people's experiences of a particular phenomenon or concept and explores these experiences in depth (Creswell, 2016). In this design, it is important to interview people who have experienced the phenomenon, to examine their interpretation of a case from their own perspectives, to investigate the facts, and to focus on the case (Yalçın, 2022).

Study Group

The study group consisted of a total of 20 preservice teachers (13 females and 7 males), who were studying in the 4th year of the Programme of Social Studies Teaching at the Faculty of Education of Firat University during the 2024-2025 academic year. Maximum variation sampling—one of the purposeful sampling methods—was used to determine the study group.

Purposive sampling is a method that is generally used in qualitative research and where units rich in information, such as individuals, groups, and institutions, are selected for specific purposes according to the questions of the study (Altunışık et al., 2023). Maximum variation sampling aims to select a sample that contains maximum variation, to determine whether there are common cases related to varied circumstances instead of generalisation, and to uncover different dimensions related to the problems (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

Data Collection Tools and Process

Data of the study were collected using a semi-structured interview form. Interview is a data collection method in which verbal communication is established through questions and answers

in order to collect information about people's attitudes, opinions, and behaviours on a particular subject (Güler et al., 2015). As interviews are an important data collection method in phenomenological studies, attention should be paid to the flexibility, elaboration, and interaction features of interviews in order to determine the meanings and experiences related to any case.

Semi-structured interviews are those in which the interviewer asks the questions prepared by him/her in advance and during the interview without prioritising them to gather detailed information about the subject he/she researches (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

The data were collected using a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher. While preparing this form, first, the literature was reviewed based on the purpose of the study, and a draft interview form with 8 questions was created. The form was sent to three field experts, and the interview questions were revised by removing one question from the form based on the opinions and suggestions of the experts. The interview form was tested with 3 preservice teachers beforehand, and a pilot study was conducted. The form was put into final form by making the necessary corrections as a result of the pilot study and paying attention to the comprehensibility of the questions.

The study complied with the principles of research ethics and was carried out with the permission received from the Firat University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (decision numbered 33579 dated 14.04.2025). The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the sub-problems of the research identified according to this purpose, and the researcher held face-to-face interviews with the participants. The researcher paid attention to the voluntary participation of the participants in the research, and the interviews were held in convenient places where the participants could feel comfortable and safe. The interviews continued until no original and different ideas were heard, and ended when data was saturated. The data obtained as a result of the interviews were used in the analysis process.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed by content analysis using a qualitative data analysis programme in the study. Content analysis is an approach that systematically identifies and quantifies words, concepts, themes, and meanings in one or more texts (Kızıltepe, 2021). This analysis aims to understand the related subject and to collect information about the subject (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

Qualitative research data are analysed by following the stages of *"coding the data, identifying themes, organising the codes and themes, and describing and interpreting the findings"* (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

The data were made suitable for analysis by transferring them to the computer for analysis, they were divided into meaningful data units according to the purpose of the study

and conceptual structure, a code list was created by assigning short codes that described these data units, and themes were identified by associating the codes with categories according to the correlation between them. The identified themes were depicted, the themes and the number of loadings were illustrated in tables, the findings were exemplified with direct citations from the participants' views, and the findings were interpreted.

It is important to utilise the credibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability strategies for validity and reliability in qualitative research (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Accordingly, while the findings were reviewed by experts and confirmed by participants for credibility, detailed description and purposive sampling were utilised for transferability, the findings were reviewed for consistency, and they were reviewed for confirmability.

FINDINGS

The findings from the analysis of the interviews held to determine the experiences of preservice social studies teachers on social participation skill, the problems they have gone through and their suggestions for solutions from their perspectives are presented under the following sub-headings.

Findings on Social Participation Skills

Table 1 presents the themes on social participation skills.

Table 1
Social participation skills

Theme	Sub-Themes	Participants	f
Social participation skill	Joining a social group	P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13, P14, P16, P17, P20	12
	Process of moving to action	P2, P3, P5, P15, P19	5
	Generating ideas	P3, P7, P10, P18	4
	Sharing opinions, thoughts, and feelings	P4, P5, P17	3
	Being knowledgeable about issues affecting society	P1, P11	2

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

When Table 1 was analysed, the participants were found to describe social participation skill mostly as "joining a social group." On the other hand, other themes identified for social participation were respectively expressed as "the process of moving to action," "generating ideas," "sharing opinions, thoughts, and feelings," and "being knowledgeable about issues affecting society." The following are some of the participants' views:

P6 “I believe that social participation is the ability to join social groups to be involved in a given circumstance or event.”

P20 “I would describe the social inclusion skill as the ability of people to join a community.”

P19 “I think that social participation skill is when a person is active in social events, i.e., moving to action in relation to an event or problem.”

P10 “Social participation is the ability of individuals to be actively involved in social life and to share their opinions about a social issue or global problem and find solutions.”

P4 “Social participation skill is the ability of people to express their opinions, feelings, and thoughts by easily presenting themselves in different environments.”

P3 “I can describe social participation skill as the ability of individuals to join a social group on any issue related to their environment, generate ideas during the process, and move to action based on these ideas.”

P17 “I can describe social participation as the ability of individuals to easily communicate with other individuals by joining groups and share their thoughts and feelings on a given issue.”

P5 “I think that the ability of a person to convey his/her opinions, feelings, and thoughts about social problems to those around him/her and to take action is a social participation skill.”

P11 “I can describe the social participation skill as the ability of individuals to be knowledgeable about issues of society in cultural, political, and economic spheres and to be a member of groups in order to contribute to these spheres.”

Findings on the Significance of Social Participation Skill

Table 2 presents the themes on the significance of social participation skills.

Table 2

The significance of social participation skill

Theme	Sub-Themes	Participants	f
The significance of social participation skill	Active involvement in social life	P1, P6, P9, P10, P14, P17, P19	7
	Finding solutions to social problems	P2, P8, P11, P14, P16	5
	Interacting with others	P3, P5, P14	3
	Teaching different skills	P4, P7, P12	3
	Raising social sensitivity	P13, P15, P20	3
	Providing equality of opportunity	P15, P18	2
	Contributing to social progress	P18, P20	2

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

When Table 2 was analysed, the participants were found to indicate the significance of social participation skill as “active involvement in social life” with the highest number of

loadings. On the other themes, the preservice social studies teachers indicated the significance of social participation as “finding solutions to social problems,” “interacting with others,” “teaching different skills,” “raising social sensitivity,” “providing equality of opportunity,” and “contributing to social progress.” The following are some of the participants’ views:

P1 *“I think that active involvement of individuals in social life is necessary and important for social participation skill.”*

P9 *“Social participation skill is important for social sciences. Because individuals should actively engage in activities in social, cultural, and scientific spheres.”*

P10 *“I think social participation skill is a highly important skill. Because social participation awareness of individuals and their active participation in social, cultural, and economic life are highly important.”*

P3 *“One of the most important skills in social studies is social participation skill. The communication and interaction of people with social participation skills with different people proves its importance.”*

P7 *“I think that social participation skill is significant for gaining and improving different skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, discussion, evaluation, and decision making.”*

P14 *“Social participation skill is an important skill for generating solutions to social problems, actively participating in social activities and interacting with different people in this process.”*

P20 *“It is highly important for individuals with this skill to make various contributions to social development and for to those with social participation awareness to improve their social sensitivity. Therefore, social participation skills should be improved from an early age.”*

P18 *“I believe that social participation skill is important to provide individuals with equality of opportunity in social life, regardless of their origin, gender, or age, as well as for individuals to be beneficial for social progress.”*

Findings on the Characteristics of Individuals with Social Participation Skill

Table 3 shows the themes on the characteristics of individuals with social participation skill.

When Table 3 was analysed, the participants indicated that they mostly considered the characteristics of individuals with social participation skill as “self-confident” individuals. Furthermore, the participants reported that individuals with social participation skills are “entrepreneurial,” “open to communication,” “respectful of individual differences,” “tolerant of different opinions, thoughts, and beliefs,” “cooperative with others,” “assume responsibility,” “sensitive to social problems,” “creative,” and “share their knowledge.” The following are some of the participants’ views:

P1 *“I believe that people with social participation skill are self-confident, have strong communication skills, and are responsible.”*

Table 3*The characteristics of individuals with social participation skill*

Theme	Sub-Themes	Participants	f
The characteristics of individuals with social participation skill	Self-confident	P1, P2, P5, P8, P9, P12, P14, P18, P20	9
	Entrepreneurial	P3, P6, P10, P11, P15, P17, P19	7
	Open to communication	P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P13, P20	7
	Respectful of individual differences	P2, P4, P7, P10, P16	5
	Tolerant of different opinions, thoughts, and beliefs	P8, P11, P14, P15, P17	5
	Cooperative with others	P5, P12, P16, P19	4
	Assume responsibility	P1, P2, P13, P16	4
	Sensitive to social problems	P2, P9, P14, P18	4
	Creative	P6, P15, P20	3
	Share their knowledge	P7, P17	2

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

P2 *"I am primarily self-confident, respectful to everyone, sensitive to those around me, and responsible as a person with social participation skills."*

P9 *"Self-confidence and sensitivity to the problems in our country are among the important characteristics of citizens in terms of social participation skill."*

P14 *"People with social participation skill should be self-confident, tolerant, and sensitive to problems in society."*

P20 *"People with such skills are good communicators, self-confident, and creative."*

P3 *"These individuals are entrepreneurs and easy communicators."*

P6 *"I think that individuals with social participation skill should possess characteristics such as being communicative, creative thinkers, and entrepreneurs."*

P15 *"People who are entrepreneurial, creative, and tolerant of different views and opinions are those with high social participation skill."*

P4 *"It is important for individuals to be comfortable communicators and respectful of differences in order to convey their opinions, feelings, and thoughts to those around them for social participation skill."*

P16 *"I think that individuals with social participation skill should possess many characteristics. Examples of these characteristics include assuming responsibility, respecting differences, and cooperating and collaborating with everyone."*

Findings Related to Social Participation Skill and Skills Expected to be Acquired

Considering how skills form a structure that affects each other, Table 4 presents the themes related to the social participation skill and the skills expected to be acquired.

Table 4
Social participation skill and the skills expected to be acquired

Theme	Sub-Themes	Participants	f
Social participation skill and the skills expected to be acquired	Empathy	P4, P5, P12, P15, P20	5
	Communication	P3, P5, P13, P16, P19	5
	Entrepreneurship	P6, P10, P18, P19	4
	Problem solving	P1, P2, P7, P19	4
	Critical thinking	P1, P7, P19	3
	Cooperation	P3, P5, P19	3
	Decision making	P7, P9, P14	3
	Responsibility	P2, P10, P11	3
	Creative thinking	P11, P19, P20	3
	Digital literacy	P13, P17	2
	Flexibility	P4, P15	2
	Recognizing stereotypes and biases	P12, P20	2
	Evidence-based inquiry and research	P14, P18	2
	Inquiry	P7, P8	2
	Social awareness	P4, P19	2
	Discussion	P7, P9	2
	Adaptability	P15, P16	2
	Citizenship literacy	P2, P17	2
	Information gathering	P7	1
	Evaluation	P7	1
	Observation	P7	1
	Self-regulation	P6	1
	Self-awareness	P6	1
	Reasoning (logical thinking)	P8	1
	Interpretation	P8	1

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

When the views of the participants on the social participation skill and the skills expected to be acquired were examined in Table 4, it was found that the participants considered these skills to be “empathy,” “communication,” “entrepreneurship,” “problem solving,” “critical thinking,” “cooperation,” “decision making,” “responsibility,” “creative thinking,”

“digital literacy,” “flexibility,” “recognizing stereotypes and biases,” “evidence-based inquiry and research,” “inquiry,” “social awareness,” “discussion,” “adaptability,” “citizenship literacy,” “information gathering,” “evaluation,” “observation,” “self-regulation,” “self-awareness,” “reasoning (logical thinking),” and “interpretation” skills. The following are some of the participants’ views:

P3 *“This skill is effective in the process of acquiring and improving social and emotional learning skills, such as communication and cooperation.”*

P4 *“Social participation is effective in empathy, social awareness, and flexibility skills.”*

P5 *“Social participation skill is extremely important in acquiring empathy, communication, and cooperation skills.”*

P6 *“I believe that many skills are effective in acquiring and improving each other. Accordingly, I can argue that social participation skill is effective in acquiring entrepreneurial, self-regulation, and self-awareness skills.”*

P7 *“During the social participation process, the Education Model of the Turkish Century is important in teaching conceptual skills such as observation, critical thinking, information gathering, questioning, evaluation, discussion, decision-making, and problem-solving in the curriculum for social studies.”*

P8 *“I believe that social participation skill, included in the curriculum of social studies, are effective in teaching many skills. I can exemplify these skills with questioning, reasoning, and interpreting.”*

P15 *“Social participation skill is effective in acquiring and improving certain skills. I can exemplify these skills with empathy, adaptability, and flexibility.”*

P17 *“I believe that social participation is effective in teaching literacy skills, such as digital literacy and citizenship literacy.”*

P19 *“I believe that social participation skill are effective in teaching many skills included in the curriculum of social studies, such as creative and critical thinking, problem solving, communication, cooperation, entrepreneurship, and social awareness. Because I think those are the skills in the curriculum that influence each other.”*

P20 *“Considering the structure of skills that influence each other, I believe that social participation skill is effective in teaching empathy, creative thinking, and recognising stereotypes and prejudices.”*

Findings on Experiences Related to Social Participation

Table 5 lists themes concerning experiences related to social participation skill.

Table 5
Experiences related to social participation

Theme	Sub-Themes	Participants	f
Experiences related to social participation	Establishing social contact	P1, P2, P3, P6, P9, P12, P18	7
	Transforming ideas into action	P5, P10, P13, P15, P16, P19	6
	Negotiating	P8, P14, P17, P18	4
	Questioning	P2, P9, P11, P17	4
	Generating ideas	P4, P8, P10	3
	Maintaining group dynamics	P7, P11, P20	3

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

When Figure 5 was examined, the highest loading was found to be on the theme of “establishing social contact” in relation to participants’ experiences of social participation skill, while the other themes were ranked as “transforming ideas into action,” “negotiating,” “questioning,” “generating ideas,” and “maintaining group dynamics.” The following are some of the participants’ views:

P3 *“I have, of course, had many experiences with social participation, because I am a highly active individual. If I had to describe one of these experiences, I would say that I join social groups and communicate with my group friends.”*

P4 *“I consider myself to be a person with high level of social participation. For example, I am sensitive to any problems that arise in society, and I am someone who tries to come up with solutions to them.”*

P9 *“If I consider my social participation experiences based on these stages, during the questioning stage, I research everything I am curious about, ask questions, and gather information. During the social contact stage, I actively engage in group work and collaborate collaboratively with others.”*

P10 *“I am interested in social and global issues, I am sensitive to them, I find solutions, and I take action to implement the solutions I find.”*

P11 *“I believe that I have social participation skill. For example, I do research on topics I am curious about in order to find solutions to social problems, and I engage in activities and group work accordingly.”*

P18 *“I join various social groups and communicate comfortably with others in the group. I share my thoughts on any issue in the group, compare them with other thoughts, and find solutions accordingly.”*

Findings on Problems Experienced in the Social Participation Process

Table 6 lists themes related to problems experienced on the social participation skill.

Table 6

Problems experienced in the social participation process

Theme	Sub-Themes	Participants	f
Problems experienced in the social participation process	Lack of communication	P2, P5, P14, P19	4
	Lack of respect for differences	P4, P17, P18	3
	Lack of self-confidence	P3, P12, P20	3
	Lack of responsibility	P6, P8, P16	3
	Negative attitudes and behaviours of the family	P6, P11	2
	Exclusion through discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions	P13, P18	2
	Lack of sensitivity	P4, P15	2
	Lack of financial means	P7, P9	2
	Lack of time	P1, P10	2

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

When Table 6 was analysed, it was determined that the participants attributed the most to the theme of “lack of communication” regarding the problems experienced on social participation skill. On the other hand, the other themes identified based on the views of the participants were as follows: “lack of respect for differences,” “lack of self-confidence,” “lack of responsibility,” “negative attitudes and behaviours of the family,” “exclusion through discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions,” “lack of sensitivity,” “lack of financial means,” and “lack of time.” The following are some of the participants’ views:

P19 *“I think that communicating with people in the group is highly important in social participation. Because I see that there are many problems due to lack of communication.”*

P17 *“I have observed in group work that some people do not even tolerate hearing different opinions and thoughts. Because they are not respectful of individual differences, this poses a major problem in social participation skill.”*

P16 *“As a person with social participation skill, I think that I am a creative and critical thinker, self-confident, trying to solve the problems around me, and responsible. I can assert that there are some problems in social participation skills, and the most important problem is that individuals neither take responsibility nor fulfil the tasks they are assigned.”*

P11 “I think that families play a highly effective role in social participation skill. Because the negative attitudes and behaviours of families cause many problems in the social participation process and affect the process negatively.”

P1 “I do not have many problems in the social participation process, but I think that I cannot use my time efficiently.”

P18 “Of course, I face some problems in the social participation process. For example, while I was treating everyone with respect in group work, I noticed that my groupmates did not treat me with respect and excluded me with discriminatory attitudes.

P4 “I have no problems in the social participation process, but I have noticed that the people around me are neither sensitive to social problems nor respectful of different opinions.”

Findings Related to Suggestions for Teaching Social Participation Skill

Table 7 presents the themes of the suggestions for effective teaching of social participation skill.

Table 7
Suggestions for teaching social participation skill

Theme	Sub-Themes	Participants	f
Suggestions for teaching social participation skill	Various activities should be organised in and out of school	P3, P4, P8, P12, P16	5
	Different teaching methods should be used	P5, P8, P9, P14	4
	The teacher should be a role model and guide	P3, P7, P12, P14	4
	Projects should be developed to solve social problems	P2, P15, P17, P20	4
	Cooperation should be made with families	P1, P6, P11	3
	Individuals should be given responsibility according to their interests and abilities	P6, P13, P16	3
	Group work should be done	P2, P10, P19	3
	Time should be managed effectively	P1, P10	2
	Equality of opportunity should be provided	P15, P18	2
	Stereotypes and prejudices should be eliminated	P13, P18	2

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

When Table 7 was analysed, it was determined that the most frequent loading regarding the suggestions for teaching social participation skill was detected on the theme of “various activities should be organised in and out of school.” On the other themes determined, the participants were found to make suggestions such as “different teaching methods should be used,”

“the teacher should be a role model and guide,” “projects should be developed to solve social problems,” “cooperation should be made with families,” “individuals should be given responsibility according to their interests and abilities,” “group work should be done,” “time should be managed effectively,” “equality of opportunity should be provided,” and “stereotypes and prejudices should be eliminated.” The following are some of the participants’ views:

P4 *“Several activities should be organised at school and outside the school for students to become individuals with social participation skill who are respectful for differences, entrepreneurial, responsible, and sensitive, and active engagement of students in these activities should be provided.”*

P19 *“Group work should be done to solve the problems experienced due to lack of communication in social participation.”*

P16 *“Suggestions for teaching social participation skill; many activities can be made both inside and outside the school, and students can be given responsibilities based on their interests, areas of curiosity, and talents.”*

P14 *“To enable students to acquire social participation skill, teachers should be models and guide students in the process. It is also important for teachers to use various teaching methods and techniques related to social participation skill in their classes.”*

P6 *“I think the attitudes and behaviours of families are important in the social participation process. I think the negative attitudes of families cause students to have some problems in social participation. During this process, cooperation should be established with families, and responsibility should be given by paying attention to students’ abilities.”*

P13 *“It is important to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices in order to allow students to actively join social groups, in order to teach social participation skill. Besides, students should be given responsibility in social and cultural activities according to their abilities, and their self-confidence should be increased.”*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It was determined that preservice social studies teachers described social participation skill as joining a social group, the process of moving to action, generating ideas, sharing opinions, thoughts, and feelings, and being knowledgeable about issues affecting society. When the descriptions of social participation were analysed, it was observed that there were different definitions. The definitions of system literacy made as a result of the study are consistent with the definitions in the literature. In their study, Aktepe and Eren (2023) found that classroom teachers defined the concept of social participation as *“involvement in social life, cooperation, and self-expression”*.

In their study, Ögdür and Uzunöz (2023) concluded that preservice social studies teachers defined social participation skill as joining a social life. The study by Turap (2023) reported that social studies teachers described social participation skill as *“doing something for society and acting as a whole with society.”* In their study, Coşkun et al., (2022) found that social studies teachers and fifth-grade students valued social participation skill on social issues, social activities, and relationships. In their study, Şahin and Karatekin (2022) found that classroom teachers defined social participation skill as *“engaging in activities independently and engaging in activities as a member of a group.”* The study by Memişoğlu (2016) reported that social studies teachers defined social participation skill as *“involvement in the social process and contribution to the solution of social problems.”*

It was concluded that preservice social studies teachers found social participation important in many ways. It was determined that the preservice teachers consider social participation skill important for actively involving themselves in social life, finding solutions to social problems, interacting with others, teaching different skills, raising social sensitivity, providing equality of opportunity, and contributing to social progress. In their study, Aktepe and Eren (2023) found that classroom teachers considered social participation important for *“socialising the individual with social development, maintaining the comfort, peace, and happiness of the society, providing psychological and spiritual development by interacting, and solving problems in daily life.”* In the study by Ögdür and Uzunöz (2023), preservice social studies teachers indicated that social participation was important for freedom of thought, being effective and active.

The results of the study showed that individuals who are self-confident, entrepreneurial, open to communication, respectful of individual differences, tolerant of different opinions, thoughts, and beliefs, cooperative with others, sensitive to social problems, and creative, take responsibility, and share their knowledge are individuals with social participation skill.

Similar to this result, a study conducted by Turap (2023) showed that social studies teachers stated the characteristics of individuals with social participation as *“tolerant, sensitive to social events and problems around them, respectful to differences, cooperative, effective citizens, knowing their responsibilities, and entrepreneurial.”* The study by Şahin and Karatekin (2022) reported that teachers indicated that students with high social participation skill possessed the characteristics of being communicative, self-confident, and respectful of different ideas.

The preservice social studies teachers stated that social participation skill was effective in teaching empathy, communication, entrepreneurship, problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, decision making, responsibility, creative thinking, digital literacy, flexibility, recognising stereotypes and biases, evidence-based inquiry and research, inquiry, social awareness, discussion, adaptability, citizenship literacy, information gathering, evaluation,

observation, self-regulation, self-awareness, reasoning (logical thinking), and interpretation skills. Accordingly, it can be asserted that social participation skill forms a structure that affects each other during the process of teaching and practising the aforementioned skills.

The experiences of the preservice social studies teachers towards social participation were assessed based on the integrated skills of establishing social contact, transforming ideas into actions, negotiating, questioning, generating ideas, and maintaining group dynamics of the social participation skill in the curriculum of the Turkish Century Education Model.

It was concluded that the preservice social studies teachers suffered from various problems during the social participation process. These problems were identified as lack of communication, a lack of respect for differences, lack of self-confidence, lack of responsibility, negative attitudes and behaviours of the family, exclusion through discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, lack of sensitivity, lack of financial means, and lack of time.

When the literature was examined, it was observed that there were studies supporting the results of the present study. In their study, Aktepe and Eren (2023) found that there were obstacles caused by the student (prejudices, lack of communication), family experiences (family attitude and pressure), and time and financial problems in teaching social participation skill. The study by Turap (2023) reported that social studies teachers suffered from difficulties during the process of teaching social participation skill, such as *“less course hours, financial constraints, and lack of respect for different opinions.”* Likewise, the study by Memişoğlu (2016) reported that social studies teachers came across problems related to *“economic standing (school students-teachers) and insufficiency of course hours”* related to social participation.

The preservice social studies teachers were found to have different suggestions for teaching social participation skill. They made several suggestions to teach social participation skill such as: various activities should be organised in and out of school, different teaching methods should be used, the teacher should be a role model and guide students, projects should be developed to solve social problems, cooperation should be made with families, individuals should be given responsibility according to their interests and talents, group work should be done, time should be managed effectively, equality of opportunity should be provided, and stereotypes and prejudices should be eliminated. It can be asserted that these suggestions are extremely important for solving the problems experienced during the social participation process and bringing up conscious individuals with social participation skill.

Likewise, the study by Aktepe and Eren (2023) reported that classroom teachers suggested that *“social, artistic, and sports activities and events should be organized for active participation; motivation and self-confidence of students should be raised by giving responsibility*

according to their interests and abilities; group work with peers should be emphasised; time should be managed effectively; and family support should be provided” in order to improve social participation skill.

The following recommendations can be offered based on the results of the present study:

- To bring up conscious individuals with social participation skill, various activities should be organised with students in and out of school, and social responsibility projects should be developed.
- Students should be made aware of social participation skill and given responsibility according to their interests and abilities.
- Teachers should be role models for students and guide them in order to enable them to become individuals with social participation skill who respect individual differences, assume responsibility, and are sensitive to social problems, tolerant, entrepreneurial, creative, and self-confident.
- Family support should be provided, and cooperation should be made with families to improve social participation skill in students.
- This study was conducted with the preservice social studies teachers using qualitative research method. Further studies on social participation skill are recommended to be conducted with different sample groups using different research methods.

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