

## Perspectives of social studies teachers on global issues

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### Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to disclose the perspectives of eight volunteer social studies teachers on global issues employed in secondary schools in Denizli province with different socioeconomic and socio-cultural structures and assessed how they reflect their notions in the classrooms. The study used a semi-structured interview form to collect data. The issue-specific data collected from the interviews was presented as a table with themes, categories, and codes, along with actual quotations from the teachers who provided their responses. Accordingly, the study divided the identified global issues into six categories: 'Nature-Related Issues,' 'Informatics-Related Issues,' 'Politics-Related Issues,' 'Economy-Related Issues,' 'Health-Related Issues,' and 'Popular Culture-Related Issues.' Teachers appeared to perform various awareness-raising activities in the classroom to bring these issues to their student's attention. Analyzing the views of social studies teachers supporting all these categories revealed that they discussed global issues from many dimensions, albeit failed to address topics such as education, racism, war, colonialism, human rights, domestic violence, nuclear energy and its use, extinct animals, or the ozone layer's depletion. Contrary to the current literature, however, teachers explicitly expressed the issues related to child labor, informatics, and popular culture as problems at the global level.



## 1 Introduction

Globalization has changed societies in terms of their cultural differences, personal mentality and behavioral patterns, values, life principles, social relations, communication, trade, and the way they express themselves politically. Both societies and individuals feel that globalization has either positive or negative effects. Thus, while defining globalization, the impact of which is felt in almost every field nowadays, it is essential to consider this concept from the sociological, cultural, economic, technological, and political perspectives to comprehend it more explicitly.

Giddens (1998) defined globalization from a sociological perspective in which events in a nation may result in consequences in other countries; as a result, social interactions pose a global impact. Tomlinson (2017) described globalization from a cultural point of view by explaining it as the interaction of individuals and societies with various living locations. When Keleş (2021) defined globalization, he emphasized several variables, including the effort of inclusion into the multinational economy and the process of following foreign trade, and, in addition to these

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variables, Sarıtaş (2006) further described globalization as the international capital. While Erkan (2007) explained globalization as a concept emerging from the advancements in communication technologies, Stiglitz (2004) specified globalization as a political concept, articulating that nation-states, companies, markets, and well-recognized leaders around the world may interact interrelatedly and the integration of nations is the primary reason for the increment in international relations. If focused on making a synthesized description involving all the explanations mentioned above, economy, politics, technological infrastructure, and cultural contexts existing in social life are the primary basis for the concept of globalization. However, it is explicit that these definitions exclude some missing categories, such as environment, education, health, and popular culture. Based on the globalization-related depictions above and all these missing categories, the present study will discuss the globalization concept by including politics, economy, health, informatics, nature, and popular culture notions.

The modifications made in the education programs that aim to qualify individuals for the ever-changing conditions with the impact of globalization have enabled individuals to be more prone to adapt to the consequences of globalization. Tye and Tye (1992) proved that student behaviors significantly changed, and they became more sensitive to global issues when raising them with a well-prepared curriculum reflecting a global perspective (Zygmunt & Staley, 2006, cited in Tye Tye). Due to the content, social studies courses are responsible for reintegrating individuals into society. The Social Studies Curricula (2018) ought to be revised in Turkey since social studies courses deliver a school setting that prepares individuals both for the society in which they live and for the various characteristics of other communities. It is also a course that fosters awareness of global concerns and encourages participation in their resolution, enabling students to comprehend inter-societal relations and the consequences of these interactions. Table 1 displays how the Social Studies Curriculum (2018) should comprise the acquisitions related to globalization and its impacts. The Introduction and Background section may include the conceptual/theoretical framework of the study, the discussion of the relevant literature, and the research purpose, including the problem statement or research questions. Discussing the relevant literature should consistently analyze the relevant literature, emphasize the gaps and inconsistencies, and discuss actions toward solving these problems. The Introduction and Background section must not include any subheading.

**Table 1** Global issues covered by the 2018 social studies curriculum

| Class Level            | Learning domain                  | Acquisitions  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 5 <sup>th</sup> -Grade | Science, Technology, and Society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the effect of technology usage on socialization and social relationships</li> <li>• Comply with security regulations while utilizing the virtual setting</li> </ul>  |
|                        | Global Connections               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explores the role of the place and environment resided in the economic relations between our country and other countries</li> <li>• Discusses the impact of communication and transportation technology on economic relations internationally</li> </ul> |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> - Grad | Culture and Heritage             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains the role of historical trade routes in political, cultural, and economic relations between societies.</li> </ul>  |

|                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
|                        | Science, Technology, and Society          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposes theories about the impacts of scientific and technological advancements on future life.</li> </ul>   |
|                        | Global Connections                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assesses our country's cultural, social, political, and economic relations with the Turkic Republics and neighboring states.</li> <li>Evaluate the economic ties between our nation and other foreign nations.</li> <li>Analyzes our country's international roles, considering our political, military, economic, and cultural aspects</li> <li>Questions about the influences of popular culture on national culture</li> </ul> |
|                        | Individual and Society                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discusses the role of media in social change and interaction</li> </ul>   |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> -Grade | Production, Distribution, and Consumption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes plans for a career by considering the new professions that have evolved in response to global developments.</li> </ul>  |
|                        | Global Connections                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops ideas with his friends to address the solution to global issues</li> </ul>   |

Considering the acquisitions in Table 1, those aspects explicitly possess informatics, social, political, cultural, and economic facets of international issues. Additionally, including an acquisition column related to popular culture aims to make students more conscious of the changes originating from popular culture and their ability to comprehend their culture and the society in which they live more readily. However, it is also remarkable that there are efforts to support the students in career planning by incorporating the acquisition of newly and globally emerging professions. It also appears that students will be more aware of the matters arising from globalization attempts worldwide and strive for solutions by acquiring an interest in global issues.

Reviewing the national literature (Artun & Özseygeç, 2020; Atabek-Yiğit et al., 2019; Durmuş, 2020; Egüz et al., 2017; Güdürü, 2021; Gürbüz, 2015; Gürbüz, 2022; Kan, 2009; Kayaalp et al., 2021; Konakay & Ergen, 2021; Uyanık, 2012; Uymaz, 2021; Palaz, 2017; Palaz & Akbaba, 2018; Sert, 2021; Şeyihoğlu et al., 2018; Yazıcı, 2013; Yiğit, 2019) and international literature (Alazzi, 2011; Bonnie et al., 2021; Bourn & Hunt, 2011; Canziani et al., 2021; Chou, 2020; Danielraja, 2019; Hashizaki & Kawaguchi, 2012; Mahler, 2020; Sabancı et al., C. (2017). Trumper, 2020; Wongchantra & Nuangchalerm, 2011), focusing on global issues, revealed that studies nationally and internationally carried out by a wide sample range from primary and secondary school students, pre-service teachers, and social studies teachers to the Social Studies Curriculum taught in Turkey and abroad. These studies mainly focused on the perspectives of various sample groups and their recommendations for solutions to these global issues. However, there have not been sufficient qualitative studies on this topic undertaken by social studies teachers. These studies also failed to cite how social studies teachers reflected the defined global issues in their classrooms. Therefore, the current study aimed to ascertain the perspectives of social studies teachers about global issues and how they reflect their notions in their classrooms.

## 2 Research Design

Qualitative research is an approach in which interviews are conducted to depict perceptions and events realistically and holistically. The collected data is non-digitized, and it attempts to describe in-depth, interpret, and comprehend the perspective of the participants (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Thus, this study was carried out within the parameters of qualitative research as it aimed to

ascertain the perspectives of social studies teachers on global issues and how they reflect these views in their lessons.

## 2.2 Participants and procedure

Criterion sampling is one of the purposive sampling strategies used to identify the social studies teachers who will participate in this study. The rationale behind the criterion sampling approach is to analyze and review all cases that meet some critical criteria previously set by the researcher (Creswell, 2013).

Denizli province, where the study was carried out, is a significantly medium-sized agricultural, commercial, industrial, and tourism city in southwest Turkey. Accordingly, populations from various Turkish provinces migrated to Denizli, and thus the city has become a community where individuals of all nationalities dwell. Denizli is a city that hosts people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. Since Denizli society consisted of residents from diverse sociological structures, the researcher had already lived in Denizli province for 22 years (4 years as a university student and 18 years as an academician-researcher) and was highly acquainted with the social structure of the city; the current study focused on teachers employed in different cultural and socioeconomic level schools and secondary school students enrolled in Denizli.

The selection of social studies teachers as the sample group was based solely on one criterion. According to the social studies curriculum for secondary schools in Turkey, 5th, 6th, and 7th grade students have explicitly progressed in comprehending global issues. Thus, the teachers who attended the classes at these grades were selected voluntarily to participate in the study as social studies teachers. The names of the participatory teachers were kept confidential, and individual pseudonyms were assigned to them during the research. Table 2 displays information on the demographic features of the participant teachers.

**Table 2** Teachers' demographic features whose perspectives were subject to direct quotation

| Pseudonyms | Teaching Experience | Teaching Classes | Educational Statuses |
|------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Leyla      | 20                  | 5, 6             | Post Graduate        |
| Kezban     | 17                  | 5, 6, 7          | Graduate             |
| Serhat     | 14                  | 6, 7             | Post Graduate        |
| Fatma      | 23                  | 5, 6, 7          | Graduate             |
| Melike     | 16                  | 5, 6             | Graduate             |
| Tayfun     | 19                  | 6, 7             | Post Graduate        |
| Bekir      | 21                  | 6, 7             | Graduate             |
| Yaşar      | 17                  | 5, 6, 7          | Doctorate            |

As depicted in Table 2, eight volunteer social studies teachers, equally split between male and female, participated in the study. Participants' teaching experiences ranged from 14 to 23 years. Of the eight participants, three had postgraduate degrees and one a doctorate, whereas four had undergraduate degrees.

## 2.3 Data collection and tools

Considering the possibility of having replies to specific queries and receiving additional information during the interview, this study used a semi-structured interview form. In the semi-structured interview, the researcher had the freedom to both ask pre-prepared questions and additional questions to elicit more details about these queries by adhering to the queries prepared in advance (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Hence, the researcher potentially acquired more in-depth

justifications regarding the global issues perceived by the participants and examples of how they reflected on these topics in their classrooms. During the semi-structured interview, the following questions were posed to participants: 'What comes to mind when you consider (an) issue/issues at the global level? What activities do you practice in your lessons to draw attention to (this) issue/issues in your classes?'

The interview form, the Teacher's Permission Form, the Ethics Committee Decision Document issued by the University's Publication Ethics Committee, the audio recordings, and transcriptions of the interviews were held for future reference in case ethical issues arise.

## 2.4 Data analysis

The study data were subject to content analysis. Accordingly, the researcher acquired the data in the form of audio recordings. Initially, these recordings were analyzed and transcribed using the Microsoft Office Word program. While analyzing the qualitative data, this application enabled the researcher to develop codes, categories, and themes based on his unique intellectual understanding of the subject matter. The data were then coded and transcribed. Following the coding procedure, categories and themes were generated, and the relationships between these codes were assessed. Direct quotations were also frequently used to help the reader understand the participants' perspectives in greater detail and better illustrate their opinions.

## 3 Findings and comments

The findings section included the perspectives of social studies teachers on global issues and how they integrate these issues into their lessons.

### 3.1 Findings about global issues and teachers' efforts reflecting these issues in their lessons subheading

Social studies teachers exemplified the global issues in society by examples as displayed in Table 3. The data in the table below was compiled from the teachers' responses provided as multiple opinions.

**Table 3** Global issues

| Theme         | Category                   | Code   |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| GLOBAL ISSUES | Nature-related Issues      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Disasters</li> <li>• Environmental Pollution</li> <li>• Deforestation</li> <li>• Population Growth</li> <li>• Unplanned Urbanization</li> <li>• Decline in Agricultural Products</li> <li>• Climate Change</li> </ul> |
|               | Informatics-related Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraud</li> <li>• Data Hacking</li> <li>• Hacker Culture</li> </ul>  |
|               | Politics-related Issues    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terror</li> <li>• Migration</li> <li>• Gender Inequality</li> <li>• Injustice</li> <li>• Neglecting Children's Rights</li> </ul>  |
|               | Economy-related Issues     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequality in Income Distribution</li> <li>• Easy Ways to Make Money</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> </ul>   |

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
|                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Labor</li> </ul>  |
| Health-related Issues          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infectious Diseases</li> <li>• Antivaccination</li> <li>• Malnutrition</li> <li>• Internet Addiction</li> </ul> |
| Popular Culture-Related Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual Relations</li> <li>• Cultural Shift</li> <li>• Brand Obsession</li> <li>• Wannabe</li> </ul>            |

Considering the categories and codes listed in Table 3, social studies teachers have expressed their views on the domains of nature, informatics, politics, economy, health, and popular culture as the global concerns that pose a potential impact on the everyday life of individuals, and that teachers also remarked global issues that may significantly influence the life-quality of individuals.

### 3.1.1 Nature-related Issues

Nearly all teachers (7 teachers) expressed nature-related issues. It was explicit that teachers were aware of the nature-related topics and highly sensitive to this domain. One of these participants, Teacher Kezban, verbalized the following statements about the subject:

“I believe that environmental pollution is becoming a more prominent issue nowadays. The pollution problem of one country in the world also becomes a pollution problem of another country. Global issues like acid rain, nuclear weapon use, global warming, unbalanced population growth, energy resource depletion, loss of green belt and deforestation, traffic jams in big cities, air, water, soil, and noise pollution, earthquakes, and flood disasters have become concerns posing threats to all nations. In my class, I use cartoons displaying the damage to the environment, and while discussing these cartoons with my students, I try to instill environmental awareness in them.”

Teacher Bekir remarked that the most prominent topic at the global scale is nature-related issues and emphasized the enormity of the harm done to nature as follows:

“There is a population increase globally. This rise in population also leads to the emergence of unplanned urbanization. By saying unplanned, I refer to the loss of green belts, deforestation, and water and soil pollution while constructing. Agriculture-led production does, however, decline due to such constructions in agricultural areas. Since the cultivation area is used for construction, it also leads to a decrease in agricultural production. Most recently, a poor (unplanned) construction strategy resulted in a significant flood disaster in Kastamonu province (a city in Turkey). Nearly 80 of our citizens lost their lives in this tragedy. In another incident, over 1000 people died in a flood disaster in Pakistan. I discuss news in my classroom. We also mention the origins, consequences, and solutions for such issues. My goal is to generate nature consciousness among my students.”

Stating that the most critical global topic was climate change and describing that climate-related issues affect every aspect of human life, teacher Melike made the following comments:

“We are observing global climate change. The melting of glaciers and the subsequent rise in sea levels is a vivid illustration of climate change. The other day, a fisherman acquaintance complained about the lack of available fish. Also, fish species are disappearing. The water cycle is changing, and water is running low on Earth. Climate change also affects the migration and breeding seasons of birds. I present all this news to the students. I want my students to consider how to resolve these issues.”

Teacher Tayfun, who strived to exemplify that forests are disappearing every day and deforestation causes a variety of concerns, expressed his perspectives on the subject as follows:

“I think the key concern at the global level is the daily decreasing amount of forest in the world. It entails deforestation, endangering the lives of several species, declining the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere, increasing the probability of disasters-like landslides, and reducing the quality of human life. I always inform my students about these issues while teaching in class. Then we accompany them to TEMA's tree-planting activities (Turkish Foundation for Combating Erosion, Afforestation and Conservation of Natural Assets). I invite a staff member from TEMA to my class and let this person speak to my students about the significance of this topic. Meeting an outside expert always draws the attention of my students.”

It was obvious that teachers pointed out numerous nature-related issues in their minds, and they were explicitly sensitive to such topics. It is noteworthy that teachers convey nature-related subjects in their classes and individually strive to draw their students' attention to this issue.

### *3.1.2 Informatics-related Issues*

Assessment of the codes depicting Informatics-related issues in Table 3 revealed that the teachers (4 teachers) attach great significance to cyber crimes, although they refer to them the least. Teacher Serhat, one of the participants who underlined how indeed vulnerable the security networks responsible for data protection (exclusivity) in a digitalized and globalized era, verbalized that data hacking has been a global issue with the following statements:

“We daily hear more and more about incidents such as hacking of accessed systems, changing data, and corrupting or erasing it. With such conduct, people gain an unfair advantage for themselves and cause serious harm to others. Anyone from any country can hack into someone else's computer and hack their data. This action is a global crime, and there is no deterrent penalty for this conduct. In Turkey, this crime carries a prison term of three to six years. In my classes, I inform my students about the news on this subject.”

Teacher Leyla, who aspired to highlight that there were serious crimes related to Internet fraud even at the international level, emphasized its significance as a global issue with the following phrases:

“The conduct of hacking is widespread on websites or social media. A person living in one country can easily defraud another person living in another country in the world. There are accounts created on social media sharing no pictures or information. People use these accounts maliciously for different purposes. I talk about such crimes in my lectures. I share such news with the classroom so that children are aware of this issue, and I advise them to act consciously and not to believe everyone and everything they hear.”

Teacher Serhat expressed his perspectives on data hacking as follows:

“Years ago, a German citizen hacked and used my credit card to purchase a PlayStation. There was a considerable amount of withdrawal from my credit card. Consider the possibility that someone from a foreign nation is accessing your accounts without being penalized. I warn my students about such incidents in my classes, and although they are curious about being hackers, they believe that being a hacker is cool. I encourage my students to consider what it means to usurp someone else's rights and the consequences.”

Teacher Kezban, who believed that children and teenagers had the urge to become hackers, indicated the following on the subject:

“I have noticed that values like working hard to achieve something and getting what you want

with the earned money are dwindling with time. Young individuals appear to be enticed and seduced to become hackers. I had read the newspaper news that young people in other nations were hacking other people's computers to access their accounts. We share such headlines in the classroom and discuss them together. Young individuals consider being a hacker and gaining things in these ways without exerting effort admirable and cool conduct.”

Evaluation of the teachers' responses on the category of informatics-related global issues highlighted the advent of informatics and the internet into all areas of people's lives to make life easier; however, they also resulted in both positive and difficult-to-control outcomes. Teachers draw attention to the fact that ethical issues, such as the right to privacy and the inability to ensure the security of personal data, are at the core of the most significant informatics challenges.

### *3.1.3 Politics-related Issues*

Assessment of the codes generated by the teachers' responses about the politics-related issues revealed that they referred to critical topics at the global level. (Five teachers touched upon problems related to politics.) The specified codes were reported both nationally and internationally. Teacher Kezban specifically expressed that terrorism is a significant global issue and stated the following:

“Indeed, terrorism is a pressing concern that is challenging to overcome in practically every nation. To me, the consequences of terrorist acts affect all humanity. People lose their children, spouses, family, and friends. You, in person, empathize with them, get upset, and worry that it might also happen in your nation. Therefore, I specifically address this issue in my lectures. I want my students to have empathy on the subject.”

Fatma Teacher strived to convey that migration was the most prominent issue worldwide, originating a variety of concerns. She verbalized the issue as follows:

“Recently, refugees have become a critical concern in several countries. Immigrants have difficulties adapting to the migrated countries. Migration also impacts the balance of the national population, health and educational system, and cultural context. I initiated two separate debating groups in my class. One group is refugees, and the other group is the natives of the migrated nation. I allowed both parties to consider and discuss what problems they experienced and what kind of problems migration might cause. I let my students empathize. In one of my classes, some students claimed that they realized issues they had never imagined before during these debates and strived to generate solutions to these issues.”

Teacher Leyla emphasized that gender inequality was an utmost concern in countries and that women experienced significant difficulties in this regard:

“Gender inequality is the most critical issue, from deciding on an occupation to job-sharing at home. For example, women are more responsible for cooking and housekeeping than men, and moms are more concerned with their children. To draw my students' attention to gender inequality in my class, I exemplify the activities that society deems non-women occupations. For example, I mentioned the news that bus drivers and firefighters in a municipality were selected among women. I draw my students' attention to this issue by asking them their thoughts on the subject. I aim to dispel stereotypes and prejudices by conveying information and photos about female carpenters, male nurses, female scientists, and female rally drivers to the classroom.”

Teacher Tayfun argued that children's rights are allegedly not respected and given not enough consideration, and stated the following:



“Toddlers are forced to work and are subject to abuse. Children are exposed to various cases of abuse not only nationally but also internationally. When discussing this subject with my students, I put a strong emphasis on asking them about their rights and the kind of life they desire. I have prepared a poster form of my Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Children conduct a presentation in class outlining the rights portrayed on the posters. Some kids appear to experience neglectful childhoods. Through these posters, we engage young kids in discussing their rights. I suppose we fail to provide children enough to live their childhood.”

Teacher Yaşar, who opined that justice-related topics were global issues, indicated the following about the subject:

“I observe that some nations have economic inequalities, whereas others have injustices involving human rights, the law, and life qualities. When we watch the global news, we witness people protesting and acting out in response to injustice in several countries. We discuss the potential consequences of inequality and injustice in my classes. I occasionally invite a lawyer and a friend of mine to my classes. My lawyer friend is wearing his robe and exemplifies the significance of justice to my students by giving examples from some of the cases he experienced in the past.”

The teachers have expressed several diverse issues, including migration, terrorism, gender inequality, injustice, and children's rights as critical global issues and national concerns such as sustaining their self-existence, participating in international politics, and defending their social interests.

### *3.1.4 Economy-related Issues*

Teachers explicitly aimed to draw attention to social injustice by generating codes related to significant economic issues such as inequality in income distribution, unemployment, and child labor. Teacher Melike, who emphasized the disparity in income distribution amongst nations, verbalized the following:

“We compare a wealthy nation to a less wealthy one where citizens are starving and lacking access to a drop of clean water. Those poor people who can not even meet their most basic needs inevitably emulate the lives of other rich people. People become dissatisfied with income disparities. In my classes, I share images of the plight of Somalian children. I want my students to think about their own lives and the lives of poor children. As a teacher, I try to make my students empathize, at least, with this issue.”

Underlining that people frequently resort to easy ways of making money nowadays and earning the honest penny is not as desirable as it used to be, Teacher Fatma remarked the following words on the subject:

“The internet used to be not that widespread. Currently, people create YouTube accounts, upload pointless and weird videos, and receive likes. Receiving more likes means making more money. I bring those weird videos to my classes and discuss them with my students. We discuss what message these videos convey and what damage they cause. I also talk about examples from the lives of Youtubers with my students in class. I am trying to clarify the personal satisfaction of earning money with hard work that will eventually pay you off.”

Expressing that unemployment in a country would turn into a global issue by also impacting other countries, teacher Bekir commented the following words on the subject:

“As an example, let us assume that there is unemployment in a country. When people cannot find a local solution, they migrate to another country where they can find a job or have better

living conditions. Numerous other issues are associated with unemployment. There may be additional issues, such as the need for adoption (harmonization) to the new country and the fact that the host nation may disregard immigrants as citizens. I tell my students that unemployment is also a global problem. We are discussing how this problem may impact other countries.”

He further mentioned that the number of child workers nationally and globally was very high and stated the economic structure of the nations regarding this issue as follows:

“In my opinion, child rights are given enough significance globally. Children have to work to support their families. Since they have to work even at a younger age, they cannot enjoy their childhood and fail to receive an education. I let my students perceive the subject based on their viewpoint about trash-collecting children. I get photos of child workers that I found on the internet. I show them pictures of children working in the fields, shining shoes, collecting trash, beggars, and construction because I want my students to empathize with these child workers.”

It was explicitly remarkable to acquire comments from teachers on the economy-related problems experienced in society and how they were accompanied by inequality in income distribution resulting in psychological and health issues, the attempts to make easy money, and how unemployment affects children's lives nationally and globally.

### *3.1.5 Health-related Issues*

Analysis of the codes generated in this category indicated that teachers addressed the issues that potentially threaten the health of almost every individual worldwide. While expressing that infectious diseases were a critical health risk throughout the world, Teacher Melike clarified the subject as follows:

“The recent COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact throughout the world. Almost every country has been affected by this contagious disease. This virus has spread very quickly and infected many people in the world. Covid-19-like infectious diseases have also become the world's most critical issue. In my classes, I discuss how infectious diseases influence the whole world and what part of people's lives it affects, and I try to explain other known infectious diseases and their impacts.”

Emphasizing that health-related issues refer to global issues, and nations explicitly experienced this fact lately, teacher Kezban verbalized the following comments on the subject:

“Infectious diseases such as SARS, Swine Flu, and Covid-19 sparked panic worldwide. Some people also made anti-vaccine propaganda during these pandemics. Those who made this propaganda influenced many individuals globally. Individuals from practically every country in the globe watched the social media profiles created on this topic, and people naturally influenced one another. I bring such headlines in my classes and try to comprehend what my students think about this subject and how countries can influence each other in health-related issues.”

Stating that global issues may arise from malnutrition, teacher Bekir specified the following details:

“We have been facing significant problems, such as malnutrition due to environmental pollution, population growth, and an overall decline in income levels. The fast food culture has been escalating recently and has had a negative effect on health. Additionally, the number of people who struggle with obesity is increasing gradually. On the contrary, some countries are experiencing a catastrophic food crisis. To summarize, there is a declining trend in agricultural production originating from poverty, unplanned urbanization, and climate change. Bad eating

habits are also extending, and unhealthy nutrition is becoming widespread. I address these issues in my lectures frequently. I also let my students think about this issue and talk about it. I mention and exemplify foods that are necessary for a balanced diet. I am also referring to the fact that obesity has become a global concern.”

Teacher Melike verbalized the reasons and consequences of malnutrition and added the following comments:

“In my opinion, there are health problems such as eating unhealthily and inadequately due to the decline in national economies, the rise in the unemployment ratio, the unequal income distribution, and the genetic alterations in agriculturally produced species. Since each factor influences the others, nutrition-based issues exist in every country. I present pictures of kids and people worldwide who cannot find enough food to eat healthily to my classes. I would like them to interpret these photos. At the end of the course, I try to draw attention to the fact that everything related to health, especially the problem of malnutrition, is a global issue.”

Expressing the Internet's favorable and adverse consequences, teacher Yaşar signified his perspective on the issue as follows:

“People use social media extensively. Due to the constant use of phones and tablets, they experience neck and headache pain. Using the Internet when necessary, albeit not constantly, is a desired behavior to access information, but some are addicted to it and need it continuously, leading to many illnesses. The World Health Organization stated the increase in eye diseases and attributed it to internet addiction. I address these issues in my classes, but my students do not take them seriously. People can not stop without touching their phones.”

Considering the health-related topics teachers voiced as global issues, they primarily originated from the economy, environmental policies, and health strategies implemented by countries. It is also explicit that teachers were not indifferent to health issues brought on by unconscious technology use.

### *3.1.6 Popular Culture-Related Issues*

Almost all social studies teachers emphasized that popular culture adversely affects societal values and provokes brand obsession and addiction among young individuals. Complaining that young individuals had their virtual worlds and that a vast majority of the young people prefer to communicate with each other from these virtual domains, teacher Yaşar remarked creation of a generation without self-confidence and unsatisfactory face-to-face communication skills and expressed his perspectives on the following sentences:

“Some of my students struggle with self-expression and lack self-confidence. When I talk to my students, I find out that even a 5th-grade (10-year-old) student uses social media. I checked out his posts. This student gets ashamed when I ask him a question in class. Of course, these virtual relationships have other adverse impacts as well. Someone in a far country may access your account and have different conversations with someone in another country. Although I try to draw attention to this issue in my classes, I do not believe my students care too much and pay attention to what I have been implying.”

Expressing that societies affect each other and the societal contexts change due to globalization, Teacher Fatma stated the following words on the subject:

“We used to have our customs and traditions. Due to the effects of globalization, people try to emulate what they see in other countries. For example, a gender reveal party of a pregnant woman, a celebration for the first dental visit of a child, or throwing lavish birthday parties for

our children have become ordinary in our culture. There was temptation leading to overindulgence. There used to be a substantial emphasis on having a family in TV series. However, nowadays, these TV series appear to be breaking rating records by motivating undesirable behaviors like wealth, treachery, and intrigue. In my lessons, I try to remind our traditions, customs, and morals, emphasizing that the cultural structure of each country is different. I ask my students to imagine how culture is evolving and what the motivations are for it.”

Expressing that there is a brand obsession among young people, teacher Melike remarked on her perspective as follows:

“Young individuals have a brand obsession with their shoes and clothes, and they believe it makes them look stylish. Young individuals are obsessed with brands because branded dress influences others, enabling them to like and accept each other. Then, they feel that they belong to a group. In my classes, I try to exemplify that it is unnecessary to insist on wearing branded clothes, and unbranded clothes may be as cool and comfortable as others. However, I can not become influential on them. Children force their families to shop from these brands. I try to explain that this obsession is not in their favor, but they reject me, saying 'yes! but my teacher,' and use denying words.”

Summarizing the psychology of young individuals who imitate and emulate popular culture in the world, teacher Leyla conveyed that popular culture is common among young individuals:

“Young people especially emulate the celebrities they follow. Some people embellish their actions and post them on social media. Others follow, emulate, and imitate them. For example, there is a party trend called baby showers lately. People throw extravagant parties before their babies are even born. There is overindulgence and incentive at these parties. They celebrate their children's birthdays in such a lavish and expensive way. This situation of imitating the envied appears to originate from the feelings of being accepted, of being different or being liked. However, I believe that such practice of copying the envious is against our society and attempts to alter the social order. I try to explain this situation to my students in my lessons.”

Teachers put forth an effort to expose how popular conduct and preferences, as well as favoring the popular, adversely affect their students' daily lives.

## 4 Discussion and Conclusion

The current study, which aimed to assess the perspectives of social studies teachers on global issues, found that teachers considered nature- and politics-related topics the most significant global issues. In addition to these two major topics, they subsequently emphasized informatics, economy, health, and popular culture as the critical domains reflecting global concerns.

Regarding global issues, the review of the current literature revealed the following researchers emphasized their respective study fields as follows: Akgun et al. (2016) mainly environmental pollution; Aydın (2016) environmental issues, water problems, health concerns, terrorism, and energy-related issues; Basir & Sari (2022) gender inequality; Bonnie (2021) inequity, migration, education, and human rights; Canziani et al. (2021) migration, education, human rights, and climate changes; Chou (2021) multiculturalism, human rights, and justice; Durmuş (2020), environmental pollution, harm to living creatures, glacier melting, climate change, and diseases; Gürbüz (2022), environmental change (global warming, deforestation, drought), terrorism, war and violence, environmental issues (air-water-soil pollution), hunger, scarcity, poverty, and natural disasters; Kayaalp et al. (2021), environmental pollution, global warming, drought, technology addiction, war, and violence; Karaca (2007) industrialization, income inequality and poverty;

Karagözoğlu (2022), environmental pollution, climate changes, energy resources depletion, wars, migration, and hunger. Correspondingly, the following researchers also focused on the following study fields: Kitapçı (2017), income disparity, poverty, economic crises, corruption, natural and environmental destruction, climate changes, demographic issues, migration, global ethical and health problems; Kirwood, (2001) serious illnesses, population growth, income disparity, environmental pollution, ethnic racism, and migration; Koraş (2019) water scarcity, global warming, climate change, nuclear energy, acid rain, melting of glaciers, and greenhouse effect; Mahler (2020) overpopulation and environmental issues; Özel (2021) global warming, poverty, pandemic, natural destruction; Özey (2021) energy-related topics, violation of human rights, population growth, terrorism, and health problems; Özdemir-Özden and Özden (2015) global warming, water scarcity, climate change, acid rain, nuclear pollution, glacier melting, greenhouse effect, air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, visual pollution (color pollution, transponders), soil pollution, garbage/waste problems, harm to green belt (cutting trees, forest fires, deforestation), unplanned urbanization, and toxic wastes; Özgen (2012) natural disasters, human rights-related issues, population, global energy problems, environmental issues, and health concerns; Öztürk and Öztürk (2015) natural resource depletion, radioactive pollution, climate change, air pollution, and unplanned urbanization. Finally, the following authors concentrated on the following research topics: Palaz (2017) hunger, war, and natural resource depletion; Sayhan & Çamurcu (2013) population-related issues, human rights violations, climate change, issues arising from limited natural resources, energy need, and issue, and climate changes; Seçgin et al. (2010) global warming, ozone depletion, soil pollution, sound pollution, light pollution, air pollution, water pollution, deforestation, and animal extinction; Sert (2021) glacier melting, Covid-19, earthquake, drought, war, pollution-related issues, and drought; Şeyihoğlu (2018) wars and invasions, global warming, greenhouse effect, natural disasters, hunger, starvation, and poverty; Uyar et al. (2018) air pollution, water pollution, and noise pollution; Uymaz (2021) global warming, air pollution, drought, terrorism, forest fires, wars, lack of education, natural disasters, refugee-related issues, and injustice; Yalçınkaya (2013) water pollution, air pollution, noise pollution, deforestation, natural disasters, traffic accidents, unplanned urbanization-slum problems, and visual pollution; Yılmaz and Gültekin (2012) global warming, water-air-soil pollution, desertification, and loss of biodiversity; Yiğit (2019) issues related to ozone layer depletion, water pollution, health issues, wars, food-related issues, extinct animals, racism, climate change, energy resource depletion, and overpopulation; Yoshihara (2011) domestic violence and children's rights.

Analysis of the above-mentioned literature focusing on global issues revealed that education, racism, violation of human rights, colonialism, domestic violence, nuclear energy use, extinct animals, and the depletion of the ozone layer are the issues defined at the global level; however, the participant social studies teachers failed to address none of these issues in interviews. Contrary to the reviewed literature, the participant teachers explicitly verbalized informatics, child labor, and popular culture as global issues in the current study. In this context, these findings do not match the results of those studies in the literature.

As technology advances daily, different types of crimes emerge every day. In this context, the crime that is most open to change and development is cybercrime. In the globalizing world, new technological developments are spreading worldwide. As a result, new cyber crimes are emerging in our country due to developing technology. There is no single law against cyber crimes in our country. Instead, provisions regarding cybercrimes have been added to existing laws. Legal regulations in the field of informatics in Turkey have been prepared in general to be compatible

with EU directives. Cyber crimes contain regulations regarding each crime's own field. The first legal text in Turkey regarding cyber crimes is the phrase "...system that automatically processes information..." added to the Turkish Penal Code No. 765 in 1991. As a result of the needs that arose from now on, provisions regarding informatics were added to many laws. The most comprehensive regulation regarding cyber crimes is included in the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237. In the tenth chapter of the Turkish Penal Code, under the title of crimes in the field of informatics, regulations have been made on the subjects of entering the information system, blocking, disrupting the system, destroying or changing data, and misuse of bank and credit cards. Also in the Turkish Penal Code, obstruction of communication, insult, violation of the confidentiality of communication, listening and recording of conversations between individuals, violation of the privacy of private life, recording of personal data, unlawful giving or seizure of data, failure to destroy data, use of information systems in qualified theft and fraud, drugs and stimulants Regulations have been made under the headings of facilitating drug use, forming an organization to commit a crime, obscenity, revealing duty-related secrets, slander, alienating the public from military service and incitement to disobey the law.

In their study, Bilgin and Güner (2017) concluded that the effects of popular culture on primary school children impact a daily consumption culture that is commercially produced and consumed more and more every day. Participants in İçen's (2020) study emphasized that popular culture directs individuals to consumption and its negative effects on individuals. The findings of the research coincide with the findings of the studies in the literature. Child labor is a critical social problem in Turkey. The reality of child workers in Turkey was made clear in the 2022 budget proposal of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. As reported in this proposal, the number of child workers reached 12 thousand 457 in 2020 (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2020). Assessing the responses of the social studies teachers on economic-related issues indicated that they categorized the child labor topic under economic issues, relating it to inequality in income distribution and unemployment. Analyzing the income levels of crowded families demonstrated that such families are poor, and children in these families have to work for themselves and their families (Gülcan, 2007). Child labor is an indicator of the violation of children's rights. The participant teachers also considered neglecting children's rights a global issue. This finding coincided with only Yoshihara (2011), as it reported the violation of children's rights as a global issue. Social studies instructors' typical interactions with comparatively younger students in their classes may be the main factor contributing to their elevated sensitivity to children's rights and child labor. The participating teachers also claimed that issues relating to popular culture are global and may have unfavorable effects, such as social problems, changes in societal cultures, temptation, brand obsession, a propensity for easy things, and the harms of virtual relationships globally. These findings corroborated with statements of high school teachers in Özgan, Arslan, and Kara (2014), documenting that students are exposed to cultural degradation due to the influence of popular culture.

With the civil war in Syria, thousands of Syrians have been allowed to take refuge in Turkey as refugees since 2012, resulting in a refugee problem in Turkey. As stated by the General Directorate of Immigration Administration, Harmonization and Communication on May 8, 2022, there have been 5 million 506 thousand 304 foreign nationals in Turkey, including Syrians, under temporary protection. Additionally, Turkey welcomed migrants from Afghanistan and Iran, and by providing for their humanitarian needs, such as food, shelter, and transportation, it originated additional issues (change in the demographic structure of the cities, terrorist acts, educational and health

problems, etc.). Therefore, the participant teachers in the current study also considered migration among the most pressing global issues.

In Turkish society, childcare is traditionally a responsibility assigned to the mother. In a traditional family structure, while men are required to perform household duties such as repairing and gardening, women are expected to do tasks allotted to them, such as cooking, dishwashing, and house cleaning. However, some participating teachers emphasized that such social attitudes related to gender inequality are a global-scaled concern because they are not only present in Turkish society but also in other countries worldwide. This conclusion solely coincided with the finding of Sari (2022) that the participant associate degree students considered gender-related issues as a concern at the global level. However, these findings also corroborate with Mastari, Spruyt, and Siongers (2021), who reported that male students adopt a sex-oriented attitude to choosing a job out of peer pressure. In contrast, female students preferred a lower desire for gender-stereotypical employment.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused radical changes in individuals' lives since the very first day. The virus infected almost 110 million people worldwide, and more than 2.3 million people lost their lives (WHO, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, a sizable portion of the worldwide population, both at home and abroad, lacked trust and considered vaccination applications unsafe, leading to a global anti-vaccine campaign. It is explicit that teachers perceived this topic as a global issue since the COVID-19 pandemic has spread over whole countries after 2019, and the experiences of diverse nations were also typical. Only Sert (2021) reported that COVID-19 was a global issue that coincided with the current study findings under the infectious diseases category; however, the anti-vaccination topic under this category did not exist in any of the studies in the literature as a global issue.

Almost all teachers primarily focused on informing their students about global issues in their classrooms; and subsequently took actions, such as conveying messages, sharing recent news, planning field trips (to TEMA), establishing cause-and-effect relationships, attempting to make the subject visualized (with cartoons and photographs), inspiring their students to perceive the issues, and inviting different speakers (a lawyer and a representative from Türkiye Foundation for Combating Erosion, Afforestation and Protection of Natural Assets-TEMA) in term of bringing such topics up in their class while teaching their students. Some studies documenting the subject-related outcomes in the literature indicated that out-of-school experiences improve the learning process and make it more effective and permanent (Sontay et al., 2016). Seyhan (2020) emphasized that out-of-school learning makes the learning process permanent. University students who participated in the study of Merle and Craig (2017) stated that the guest speakers enabled them to make more sense of real life with the current information and examples they shared with them in the lesson; as a result, they reconciled the knowledge they gained with real life after the speech. Topçubaşı and Polat (2014) also indicated that cartoon-based teaching allowed the students to fully comprehend the cartoon character and the theme (the subject emphasized); consequently, the approach mediated them to express their thoughts more effectively.

Unlike studies reviewed in the literature, social studies teachers who participated in this study concluded that cyber crimes, child labor, and popular culture were global issues. Considering this data, which manifests itself in various areas of current societies, it is conceivable to potentially ensure the participation of students and teachers in activities such as projects, conferences, and

seminars related to these worldwide issues to raise their awareness, sensitivity, cognition levels, and responsibilities. Furthermore, organizing educational activities in cooperation with various non-governmental organizations may serve students become more sensitive to global issues.

## 5 Statement of Researchers

In this section, you are expected to declare the information regarding the titles given below.

### 5.1 Researchers contribution rate statement

The authors contributed to the study.

### 5.2 Conflict statement

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest.

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