

What children rights mean to children: Children's citizenship (Turkish case)

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Abstract

Children's citizenship begins with knowledge and awareness of their rights and responsibilities in life. In line this view, this article aims to contribute to the understanding of children's views on their rights. This study was done to determine the awareness and views of 5th grade middle school students regarding children's rights. Phenomenology design was used in the study. The study group consisted of 133 5th grade students (57 boys and 76 girls) studying in a secondary school in the central district of Bolu province in the 2nd semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Word association test and semi-structured interview form were used. In conclusion, it was seen that majority of the participants express provision and protection rights than participation. The children in this study mostly mentioned their rights in the context of provision and protection but participation rights were not in the forefront in their lists about children rights. Based on these findings, it is seen that children learn their rights mostly in the context of school. Family and the media are the other most mentioned sources of learning about children's rights in this research.

1 Introduction

Children are the assurances the future and the joy of living. Raising today's child as future adults is our duty for the humanity. The nations whose children can't be raised healthily and knowledgeable fall fast like rotten buildings.

Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK

As stated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, today's children built the future of their country and societies. It is vital to give required importance to children and meet their needs for a strong and durable societies (Kamath, 2014). The emphasis on children's rights in international area is ratified by United Nations General Assembly by U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNCRC which was approved in 1990 (Hammersley, 2015) and came into force in Turkey on October 2, 1995. The UNCRC is based on human rights theory (Cole-Albäck, Pascal & Bertram, 2024) and aims to provide an outline for children's well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2008), as well as the physical, moral,

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mental, spiritual and social development of children (Kamath, 2014) and to provide a basic framework for monitoring, protecting and supporting children's well-being and realizing their rights (Camfield, Streuli & Woodhead, 2009). It discusses children's rights under 54 articles with social, economic, cultural, civil (personal) and political dimensions (Daiute, 2017).

The concept of child is generally considered in need of protection and vulnerable (Daiute, 2017). As stated in the first article of UNCR, “every person up to the age of eighteen is considered as child” (UNICEF, 1989). The CRC definition is generally accepted as universally although there is no exact point at which childhood ended, and it is really a culture-oriented term. Children rights are subject to certain principles like human rights, and they are inalienable (it is in the nature of the childhood), universal (every child has same rights regardless of their origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.) and indivisible (social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights are related and has the same importance) (Tyesta, Sarawati & Arif, 2020). Although children's rights have some principles like general human rights, the important reasons for their separate, special regulation are as follows: Children perceive and interpret the environment differently than adults and have special needs due to their unique physical and mental personality traits. Children may encounter negative situations such as lack of care in basic areas such as nutrition, shelter, health and education (Akyüz, 2013). For such reasons, it is important to regulate children's rights separately and specifically to protect them and meet their needs.

Especially, in recent years there is an extensive emphasis on children's wellness and their rights. People from different countries and societies have research on these concepts and make comparisons between countries in this context. Over the years, the idea of children's rights influence on children's wellbeing is gained public commitment (Kosher and ben-Arieh, 2016). The idea that children have a right to express their viewpoints about their lives and well-being is become more popular (Ben-Arieh, 2012) and examining children's own knowledge and views on their rights is recognized. Besides, if children rights are developed to protect and promote children it is essential to examine how those rights are understood by their owners. It is also important to determine how children feel when society ignore them. Based on those, the present research aims to identify children's views of children's rights and understand these rights throughs children's lenses.

Until Locke and Rousseau children's rights were not considered, and it was welfare-oriented until twentieth century. After twentieth century children began to be seen as autonomous beings (Daly, 2017). Children should be active stakeholders of their own lives, and their views should be considered together with the perspectives of the adults (Gerds-Anderson, 2021). Developing children's awareness in the context of their rights is critically important in terms of encouraging individual participation and strengthening democratic values in society (Ursin & Haanpää, 2018). The knowledge, skills and values of a democratic society are acquired during childhood and knowledge about rights includes awareness and understanding of basic concepts related to democracy and human rights (Flowers, 2009). Therefore, the young individuals become aware of their rights, should be more conscious about how rights play a role in their life and they also in afford to defend their own rights. In theory children are placed as “non-yet citizens” but they also have rights and responsibilities in the context of liberty and equality (Moosa-Mitha, 2005).

Citizenship is about both rights and obligations that allow people to protect their social and civil freedoms while give them opportunities to express political opinions (Cohen, 2005). Theorists have had difficulty in the context of governance of children in liberal democracies and generally

children are considered as semi-citizens who lack the fundamental capacities to engage in democratic life. However, childhood is differently constructed in different societies (James, 2010) and their views shouldn't be denied especially about the issues that directly related with their lives.

Children are affected by important contexts such as home and school in the process of acquiring knowledge and behaviors related to their rights (Peterson-Badali & Ruck 2008) and gain perceptions about their rights (Hareket & Yel, 2017). These learning experiences are mostly dependent on family dynamics (Peterson-Badali & Ruck 2008) because children begin to learn their rights within the framework of their families inner circle. Therefore, children's learning situations are affected by the differences in knowledge and behaviors of children from different families (af Ursin & Haanpää, 2018).

Children spend a large part of their daily lives in the school environment, these interactions shape their views of life and themselves. Therefore, for many children, school is a context where the basic principles citizen learned and experienced (Harcourt & Hägglund, 2013). Since education is a public service provided to all children, we can say that educational activities play a critical role in determining what steps should be taken to develop children's rights (Riddell & Tisdall, 2021) and in the implementation of children's rights (Harcourt & Hägglund, 2013; Peterson-Badali & Ruck 2008).

Children's understanding of their rights is affected by culture, family, school (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009), the content and implementation of educational programs (Dündar & Hareket, 2016), age, socioeconomic status (Taylor et al., 2001) and ethnicity (Fairhall & Woods, 2021). In the study conducted by Khoury-Kassabri and Ben-Arieh (2009), it was observed that democratic family and school structures, and in the context of the gender girls are more supportive of children's rights. Nieuwenhuys (2008) argued that cultures often fail to meet children's needs. In addition, it is stated that human rights are universal with the assumption that all people are equal. Similarly, this situation applies to childhood. The fact that the UNCRC specifies the same characteristics for all children causes it to talk about an abstract child. Because children's age, gender, culture and other characteristics are qualitatively different from each other. In particular, considering the cultural relativity view, it is unlikely that children's rights will be evaluated universally due to the differences in cultures (Nieuwenhuys, 2008). Therefore, the cultural element can be seen as an important variable in determining the understanding of children's rights. In fact, studies on the subject show that culture affects children's rights (Muzingili & Taruvinga, 2017; Yang & Yao, 2023).

It is documented that, somewhat paradoxical to the principle of participation, children were not directly involved to the development process of the UNCR (Lundy et al., 2015). There is also four reasons to gain children's views on their rights. (Melton and Limber, 1992). As identified by Morrow (1999), children's rights are determined by adults according to these questions like "what do they think their rights should be?". Taylor et. al (2011) explored that children's views may differ from adults and of children were not familiar with the UNCR. Alderson also found majority of the pupils surveyed had not heard about the UNCR. Researchers identified potential barriers to understanding of rights such as complexity of the document (Williams, 2017) and difficulty of understanding complex information in UNCR (Sargeant and Gillett-Swan, 2015).

Cognitive-developmental changes about abstract issues like rights are significant. It is argued by Melton (1980, 1983) that children's understanding of rights begins with concrete, authority-based perspective until late adolescence. In contrast, beginning in the mid-1990s, global stage model

asserts that development is the important factors for children to understand about their rights. Reck, Abramovitch, et.al. (1998) and Ruck et.al. (2002) found that children reasoned differently about rights by interacting with different factors depending on situation or context. On the contrary, domain specific model claims that how children understand and experience rights in their lives effect their views on them. And cultural model claimed that deferent social, economic, political, and cultural contexts effect children's understanding on rights (Ruck et. Al., 2014).

Wade (1994) noted that elementary school children stated that children should have the freedom to do what they want regarding human rights. As reported by Melton (1980, 1983), there is a developmental progression based on perceiving rights for young children, and they think about their rights with an egocentric view in early stages. Then an abstract stage of thinking starts with early adolescence.

1.1 Rationale for the study

It is seen that the opinions of 4th grade students (Çoban Sural, 2018; Hareket & Yel, 2017; Karcı, 2016), 6th and 7th grade students (Demirezen et al., 2013), all grade levels in primary education (Ersoy, 2011), and high school students (Ay Zöğ, 2008) regarding children's rights have been obtained. Melton and Limber (1992) stated that the four important reasons for obtaining children's opinions regarding their rights are to determine what is most important for children, to design structures and procedures that will support the dignity of children during the implementation of rights, to show that children are respected by obtaining their opinions, and to determine the legal, political and socializing effects of the results obtained.

As stated by Arce (2015) most research efforts are focused on implementation of the children's rights and in theoretical area there is a need for expanding this area in the contexts of childhood studies and children's citizenship (instead of participation). For this reason, this study aims to discuss children rights in views of children and children's citizenship. Liebel (2018) also emphasizes that the very little attention is paid to what the interests of the children are, and how they contribute to their rights. In today's societies, increasing numbers of children find themselves stateless and undocumented and, both politics and the theorists have had difficulty in addressing children's citizenship statutes in democratic societies (Osler and Kato, 2022).

Children's citizenship begins with knowledge and awareness of their rights and responsibilities in life. In line this view, this article aims to contribute to the understanding of children's views on their rights. As stated in the article of the UNCRC, "States Parties recognize the right of the child who is capable of forming his/her views to express his/her views freely on all matters concerning him/her, with due regard to such views in accordance with the child's age and maturity.", children have the right to actively participate in research on issues concerning them. It has been hypothesized by Liebel (2023) that children who aware of their rights have higher self-esteem. Research also indicated that children who understand their rights participates in activities more than the others (Covell, Howe and McNeil, 2008). Besides, research on children's experiences about their rights may be useful in constructing agenda for critical issues in fulfillment of their rights (Melton and Limber, 1992). Therefore, it is important for the 5th grade secondary school students who participated in this study to grow up aware of their rights, both for the necessity of social life and for the development of individual life. Determining the perception of children's rights is valuable in terms of directing educational studies on children's rights (Hareket and Yel, 2017). In this context, it is thought that determining the opinions of 5th grade secondary school students on children's rights will provide important information to researchers conducting

research on children's rights, and to curriculum planners and implementers on how education and training activities should be structured. In addition, by accepting that children's perspectives are different and unique, they can be better supported and better served in meeting their needs as valuable members of society (Alaca, Rocca & Maggi, 2017). This study was done to determine the awareness and views of 5th grade middle school students regarding children's rights. In the context of this general purpose, the following questions were tried to be answered.

1. What is the perception of 5th grade middle school students regarding their rights?
2. What do 5th grade middle school students know about children's rights and from what sources did they learn these?
3. Which rights can 5th grade middle school students use, and which rights cannot?
4. What do 5th grade middle school students recommend for using their rights more consciously?
5. What are the conventions regarding children's rights that 5th grade middle school students know and what rights do they consider having in addition to their existing rights?

2 Method

2.1 Design

Phenomenology design was used in the study. Phenomenology design provides new information about the phenomena that we are aware of or not (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2014). In phenomenological research, experiences and the meanings we attribute to experiences are sought to be revealed through data analysis. While analyzing the data, direct quotations are included. The findings are explained and interpreted in the context of themes, categories and codes.

2.2 Participants

The study group of the research consisted of 133 5th grade students (57 boys and 76 girls) enrolling in a secondary school in the central district of Bolu province in the 2nd semester of the 2023-2024 academic year.

2.3 Measures

Word association test and semi-structured interview form were used and the questions in the interview form were prepared by the researchers in accordance with the relevant literature, developed as a draft and finalized by taking expert opinion. First, the word association test was administered and then the interview form was applied. The interview form consists of two parts. Secondary school 5th grade students were asked to answer the question about demographic information in the first part and 9 open-ended questions about children's rights in the second part.

2.4 Data analysis

In the UNCRC, children's rights are addressed as 3Ps, provision, participation and protection (Cole-Albäck et al., 2024; Habashi, Driskill, Lang & DeFalco, 2010; Heimer, Näsman & Palme, 2018). The three categories identified include different elements related to the well-being of the child. The protection category refers to the protection of the child from abuse, neglect and discrimination; the participation category refers to the child's involvement in decision-making processes; and the service provision category refers to services related to the child's life, health, education, nutrition and care (Habashi et al., 2010). Some sample articles regarding the rights of children included in the relevant convention, such as the right to provide services (Article 31. Participation in cultural and artistic activities, Article 28. Education, Article 31.1 Play, etc.), participation (Article 12, Article 13.1 Freedom of expression, etc.) and protection (Article 32.,

Article 16., Article 3.2 Necessary protection and care for well-being, etc.) are given. The findings of the research were analyzed according to the 3P classification (Cole-Albäck et al., 2024).

Content analysis was used to analyze the data to find the relationships that can explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The answers obtained from the word association test and the interview form were analyzed through coding and sorting, category development, validity and reliability stages (Saban, 2008).

2.5 Validity, reliability, and ethical considerations

The answers given to the word association test and semi-structured interview form were written by coding their gender (F: female, M: male). After analyzing the relationships between the answers and reasons for the questions brought together in this way, different categories were created for each theme by bringing the relevant ones together. In order to check whether the opinions placed under the created categories represent the category they are in, expert opinion was consulted. At this stage, to ensure the reliability of the research, the conceptual category tables of the views on children's rights were shared with two field experts (2 faculty members, 1 teacher) in their unmapped form, and they were asked to place the expressed views into one of the conceptual categories they deemed appropriate. The matching made by the expert and the matching made by the researchers were compared with each other. The reliability of the study was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula). Reliability was found to be 85% when the matching between the experts and the researchers was compared.

3 Findings

The views of 5th grade middle school students on the concept of children's rights are shown in tables.

3.1 Findings related to the concept of children's rights in the word association test

Middle school 5th grade students' views on the concept of children's rights and related sentences in the word association test are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Opinions on the Word Association Test

Category	Concept	f	Example Sentences Related to Concepts
Provision	Education	131	"Children's rights include many rights" F.43.
	Play	109	
	Medical care	105	"Children's rights are elements that are established for the well-being of children and include certain rules" F.75.
	Nutrition	89	
	Shelter	67	
	Benefiting from social activities	30	"Children's rights are the rights that children are born with" M.51.
	Entertainment	27	
	Culture	27	
	Recreation	24	
	Dressing	11	"Children's rights should ensure quality of life" F.15.
Travel	10		
Care	10	"There are many children's rights. The most basic is the right to life" M.36.	
Protection	Life	64	
	Immunity	37	
	No forced labor	15	"Children's rights are the rights of children up to the age of 18" M.11.
	Being a child until 18 years of age	14	
	Privacy of private life	14	
	Being safe	12	
Citizenship	11		

	Right to name	6	<i>"Children's rights protect children" M.31.</i>
	Having a family	5	
	Non-discrimination	2	
	Not being abused	1	<i>"Without children's rights, we would not be able to live freely and would be condemned to work" F.62.</i>
Participation	Freedom of expression	45	
	Freedom	43	
	Acceptance	5	<i>"Children's rights exist in every field. For example; street, home, hospital, school, etc." F.47.</i>
	Participate in decisions	5	
Value	Respect	5	
	Love	4	<i>"We should protect children's rights and use these rights" F.27.</i>
	Happiness	4	
	Peace	3	
	Self-confidence	3	<i>"Violation of children's rights can cause big problems for children" F.32.</i>
	Responsibility	3	
	Benevolence	1	<i>"Children's rights are equal for every child. All children have the same rights" M.40.</i>

It is seen that 5th grade middle school students associate the concept of children's rights with the concepts of education (f:131), play (f:109), and health (f:105) the most. Responses show us that 5th grade children in this study are aware of their rights. The Table 1 indicates that majority of the participants express provision and protection rights than participation. Besides, some of them mentioned values as children's rights in a wrong way.

In the study which is done by af Ursin and Haanpaa (2018), levels of awareness of the rights and CRC varied among countries. According to Melton (1980, 1983 and Melton and Limber, 1992) there is an age-linked progression from concrete to abstract thinking while the study which is done by Ruck et al. (1998) shows that participants of all ages view rights in the context of their own lives rather than abstract principles. In this study participants' views on children rights seem to be in line with their lives.

The children in this study mostly mentioned their rights in the context of provision and protection but participation rights were not in the forefront in their lists about children rights. 4th and 5th grades students in research done by Özmen, Öcal and Özmen (2012) generally expressed rights for play, education, protection from violence, and having an identity. Besides, mentions on nurturing rights are quite high than self-determination rights across participants like other studies both on children and adults (Ruck, Abramovitch et.al., 1998; Peterson-Badali and Day, 2002; Peterson- Badali et al., 2003; Peretson-Badali et.al, 2004; Day et al., 2006). Thus, this result may be interpreted in the context of children's cognitive and social competencies besides their socio-cultural environment which affects their life circumstances.

In research (Casas et al., 2006; Peterson-Badali and Ruck, 2006), children generally mention a variety of nurturance and self-determination rights like participants of this study. Most of the children in this study mentioned education, play, health, nutrition while freedom and decision making were least mentioned. Besides, it is seen that some children expressed misconceptions or failed to generate examples about rights (they described some values than rights). Ruck, Keating, et. al (1998) reported that children were generally express misconceptions based on their cognitive and social development and, they also mentioned play and recreation more than older children and adults. In this study 5th grade students' expressions on play and recreation rights might be caused by their ages but they also mentioned education similar with adolescent samples. In contrast, Peterson-Badali and Ruck (2008) found that age differences have been surprisingly few according to their sample. They associated this result with the importance development of authority during adolescence. Age differences were not addressed in this research but the results

about decision making, and freedom rights might be related with age.

3.2 Findings on secondary school 5th grade students' rights and the sources from which they learned about their rights

The views of 5th grade middle school students on children's rights and the sources from which they learned about children's rights are given in Table 2.

Table 2 Opinions on children's rights and sources of learning about rights

Category	Child Rights	f	Sample Testimonials
Provision	Education	118	
	Health	105	
	The Game	82	<i>"The rights of children that I know are the right to education, right to nutrition, right to shelter, right to health." M.36.</i>
	Nutrition	70	
	Housing	62	
	Entertainment	18	
	Rest	15	<i>"Right to privacy, right to education, right to health, right to shelter, right to nutrition, right to rest and right not to be employed" F.38.</i>
	Benefiting from social and cultural activities	13	
	Dressing	9	
	Travel	2	
Protection	Life	48	
	Immunity	32	
	Citizenship	9	<i>"The right to life, the right to education, the right to health, the right to shelter, the right to rest, the right to play, the right to nutrition, the right to privacy, the right to inviolability, the right to participate in social and cultural activities are among the children's rights I know" M.42.</i>
	Privacy of private life	8	
	Protection	6	
	Having a family	4	
	Non-operation	4	
Name rights	4		
Participation	Freedom of expression and thought	29	
	Freedom	20	
	Acceptance	2	
	Participation	1	
School	Sources of Learning about Children's Rights		
	Social studies lesson and book	87	<i>"I learned about children's rights from the Social Studies course and the textbook." M.41.</i>
	Teacher	30	
	Human rights, citizenship and democracy	20	<i>"I learned about children's rights from my mother and father" F.26.</i>
	Life science lesson	13	<i>"I learned about children's rights from UNICEF" F.11.</i>
Family	25		
Institution	UNICEF	14	<i>"I learned about children's rights from the internet" M.15.</i>
Media	Internet	25	

In Table 2, it is seen that 5th grade middle school students mostly gave the answers of education (f:118), health (f:105) and playing games (f:82) regarding children's rights. Regarding the sources where they learned about children's rights, it is seen that they mostly gave the answers of Social Studies course and book (f:87), teacher (f:31) and human rights, citizenship and democracy course (f:20). Based on these findings, it is seen that children learn their rights mostly in the context of school.

Home is the primary socialization environment for children, and they also learn issues related to rights at their homes. Decision making processes and opportunities in family are important to develop a democratic lifestyle. In this study, family is the second source for the children in learning about children rights, but the school is first. Socio-economic background and cultural factors affect equality of democratic opportunities in families. Thus, school is the most important environment

for learning about rights. Emerson and Lloyd (2016) also reported that children’s positive participation experiences are higher in school than in community.

Family and the media are the other most mentioned sources of learning about children’s rights in this research. Dependence on parents for fulfillment of basic needs provides families a basis for ensuring the rights. Families play an important role and have responsibilities to provide services to their children. The result of this research indicates that family, media and the community should be explored in the scope of children rights. Kosher and Gross-Manos (2024) also emphasized the importance of those settings for children’s participation in everyday life.

Adult’s attitudes towards children and children’s rights influence their behaviors. In Indian sample, Deb and Matthews (2012) indicated that most parents and teachers had positive attitudes about children’s rights. Culture related issues like this research should be enhanced to emphasize the effect of culture and society on how children and their rights are perceived. Besides parents should be well informed to educate their children on their own rights.

As seen at Table 2 more and more children and their families are increasingly relying on technologies and media. As schools and the whole society promotes technology in education children should be informed about the risks in online environments.

3.3 Findings on the rights of 5th grade secondary school students that they can and cannot exercise

The views of 5th grade middle school students on the rights they can and cannot use are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Opinions on available and unavailable children's rights

Category	Child Rights	f	Sample Testimonials	
Available for use	Provision	Education	85	<i>"I use many of my rights such as my rights to education, health, nutrition, shelter and life" F.46.</i>
		Health	74	
		Nutrition	56	
		Play	56	
		Housing	42	
		Benefiting from social and cultural activities	15	
		Entertainment	12	
		Dressing	10	
		Rest	7	
	Travel	3		
	Protection	Life	28	
		Immunity	19	
		Privacy of private life	5	
		Citizenship	4	
Protection		2		
Having a family		1		
Participation	Non-operation	1		
	Right to name	1		
	Freedom	15		
Unavailable	Provision	Freedom of expression and thought	12	
		Play	8	
		Benefiting from social and cultural activities	4	
	Protection	Recreation	2	
		Entertainment	1	
		Travel	1	
		Having a family	1	

	Freedom of expression and thought	7	<i>decisions are not taken into consideration at home” P.48.</i>
Participation	Acceptance	1	<i>“I mean, I think I am not accepted, sometimes I am excluded.” P.35.</i>

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that 5th grade middle school students mostly gave the answers of education (f:85), health (f:74), nutrition and play (f:56) regarding the children's rights they used; and they mentioned the rights of play (f:8), freedom of expression and thought (f:7), benefiting from social and cultural activities (f:4) regarding the rights they could not use. Ruck et al. (2014) explain that children’s conceptions of their rights may provide useful information on their perspectives on their well-being. Based on these, we can interpret the data above that the 5th graders in this research feeling safe and being cared for.

This data may also give information about the participants experiences of rights in the context in which they live. In their research Melton and Limber (1992) found that Norwegian children were more likely to support children’s nurturance rights, while American children emphasized self-determination rights. Like U.S. children Swiss children showed more greater support for self-determination rights than Chinese-Malaysian children (Cherney & Shing, 2008). Similar results are found among Jewish and Arab children in Israel and it is mentioned that Jewish ones were more supportive of their rights than their Arab peers (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008).

Munongi and Pillay (2018) found 92 percent of South African children indicated they have rights, but children also mentioned that parents and teachers don’t know about rights, and they thought that some children claimed rights when they needed them but didn’t uphold the rights of others. Besides there is a difference between knowing what rights are and knowing about UNCR. For example, af Ursin and Haanpaa’s (2018) study which they compared children in 16 countries they found that most children felt that their rights were respected. Children in Norway had significantly higher levels of agreement about perceived respect from adults.

Ozmen, Ocal and Ozmen (2014) also found that 4th and 5th graders in Turkey believed that adults like parents and teachers generally respect to their rights. Children’s perceptions towards subjective well-being and feeling of safety are significantly related with social environments. In research which is done by Burger (2017), results indicate that perceived climate of non-discrimination and the presence of a person of trust provides children necessary conditions to effectively implement their rights. Table 3 indicate that majority of the children thought that the conditions are given for them to effectively use their rights (like education, health care, nutrition, etc.). This might be a consequence of their family’s socio-economic statutes and educational backgrounds which were not held in this research. Thus, there is a need for investigate to different social and cultural settings which might be determinants of children’s perceptions.

3.4 Findings regarding the suggestions of 5th grade secondary school students to use children's rights consciously

The opinions of 5th grade middle school students on the suggestions made to use children's rights consciously are given in Table 4.

Table 4 Opinions on suggestions for the conscious use of children's rights

Category	Recommendations on Children's Rights	on f	Sample Testimonials
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	Can be more aware of rights	59	<i>"Children should be more conscious in order to exercise their rights" F.46.</i>
Child	Rights can be claimed	34	<i>"Children should protect their rights" F.3.</i>
	Learn from the main source	18	<i>"We should find the source and read if it is a book, listen to an audio and learn from the source" F.55.</i>
	March can be organized every year	11	<i>"Children can organize a march on a certain day every year to remind them that they exist" F.50.</i>
Family	Children's rights can be given more importance	29	<i>"I suggest that adults should care more about their children and take their rights into consideration" F.33.</i>
	Can be more conscious and consistent	21	<i>"Families should be more conscious and consistent in this regard" M.49.</i>
Teacher	Awareness can be raised by guidance counselors	13	<i>"Counselors can prepare activities and videos for children" F.73.</i>
	Projects can be carried out	9	<i>"Teachers can carry out projects related to children's rights" M.31.</i>
Official Institution	More informative	47	<i>"Children should be informed about children's rights" F.39.</i>
	The number and hours of classes at school can be increased	24	<i>"The number and hours of lessons on children's rights at school can be increased" F.44.</i>
	Sanctions can be imposed against rights violations	22	<i>"A person who fails to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child may be sentenced to imprisonment" F.66.</i>
	Children can be consulted about their rights	19	<i>"Children can be asked about their feelings and thoughts on children's rights" F.61.</i>
	Banners can be prepared	16	<i>"Posters can be prepared" F.36.</i>
	Child rights conventions can be signed.	13	<i>"Child rights conventions can be signed in all countries and all rights can be enjoyed by children" F.14.</i>
	Public service announcements can be created	7	<i>"Public service announcements can be prepared by the authorities" M.5.</i>

In Table 4, it is seen that 5th grade middle school students made suggestions for children, families, teachers and official institutions for the conscious use of children's rights. We can interpret this result as children are aware of their responsibilities in the context of implementation of those rights in real life environments. Home and school environments are the other stakeholder where children need to educate well about those rights and to be respected.

Tereseviciene and Jonyniene (2001) found that only 30-35% of the children assessed the existence of their rights as fully fulfilled. Others especially the children with problems didn't perceive that adults care about their interest much. Besides, Lithuanian students, in the context of the importance and existence linked the rights with their home settings more than they do in school settings. In this research at hand, majority of the children made suggestions towards family (29) and institutions like school (47) and they explained their wishes towards advocacy and information.

Participants of this research take most of the responsibility about rights and mentioned that children should be more conscious about their rights to make them in practice. Education is vital in enhancing the awareness and knowledge levels of children about their rights. Özmen, Öcal and Özmen (2011) investigated the utilization level of 4th and 5th grade students (10 students) and found that students had the education about the rights were more conscious about defending them. Thus, education for children rights is required since pre-school level.

3.5 Findings on the convention on the rights of the child and the rights that secondary school 5th grade students want to have in addition to existing children's rights

The views of the 5th grade middle school students on the conventions related to children's rights and the suggestions made for the rights that are thought to have in addition to the children's rights

in practice are given in Table 5.

Table 5 Opinions on the conventions on the rights of the child and additional rights desired

Category	Conventions on the Rights of the Child	f	Sample Testimonials
United Nations	Child Rights Convention	48	<i>"If I remember correctly, this convention was signed in Turkey in 1994. The rights of all children are protected"</i> F.51.
Category	Rights Considered to be Additional to Existing Children's Rights	f	Sample Testimonials
Adequate	Existing rights are enough	23	<i>"I don't think I need to have any other rights. I can exercise all my rights these rights are enough for me."</i> M.36.
Not Sufficient	Election and selection	5	<i>"I want to have the right to vote because this generation is up to us and we have to share our thoughts."</i> F.24.
	Ability to drive a vehicle	2	<i>"I wish I could drive a car and a motorcycle"</i> M.15.

In Table 5, it is seen that 48 of the 5th grade middle school students are aware of the UNCR. Regarding the suggestions made for the rights that are thought to have in addition to the existing children's rights in practice, it is seen that they answered that the existing rights are sufficient (f:23), the right to vote and be elected (f:5) and the right to use a vehicle (f:2). Regarding these results, most of the students who expressed opinions emphasized that the existing children's rights in practice are sufficient.

Children's nurturance rights deal with issues of care and safety while self-determination and participants rights are about making own decisions and freedom. However, Table 5 indicates that children in this research are more positive about rights in Child Rights Convention and they don't need any addition. This conclusion might depend on the question which was asked to them and detailed interviews of focus group discussions might give them opportunities to express their views in detailed. This finding supports the hypotheses that reasoning about children's rights depend on the right questions and future research is needed for introduce their suggestions.

Rights-based approaches emphasize children's digital media practices and present concerns about online safety. However, as digital citizens of our world our participants didn't mention their rights in digital environments and surprisingly didn't add ant right about digital issues. It might be interpreted as their unawareness or lack of knowledge about updateability of the law documents. As voiced by Lievens et.al. (2018) governments, educators, parents and civil society should all take their responsibility.

Children rights are generated by adults with an adult-centric approach and as holders of those rights children are not considered as partners in this process. Although formulated in pre-digital area UNCRC established basic standards to all children to save them form any discrimination. Livingtone and Bulger (2014) emphasized that as specified in CRC Articles 5 and 14 Internet is largely blind to age. Thus, articles about cyberbullying, child trafficking, misinformation, manipulation should be added in convention. In research which is based on group interviews that were conducted with 58 children, aged 12-15 years from four schools in Kenya and Sweden, Thelander (2009) found that needs for extended protection were particularly expressed. From a child perspective, rights should be explained, and more opportunities and responsibilities should be given to children as the holder of those rights.

4 Discussion

Although most of the policies and theories dictate that children be represented by their parents, democratic societies must establish comprehensive citizenship for children. Children can be defined as semi-citizens in today's democratic societies because of their passive recipient status in means of civil and political realms. The UNCR is an important support for the child participation to exercise citizenship, but their participation depends on the adults' evaluations regarding them (Invernizzi and Milne, 2005).

Participation was reviewed as an important part of children's citizenship. UNCR attempts to increase children's participation in decision making obligates adults (politicians, teachers, parents, etc.) to listen to children's opinions. Despite the principles in UNCR, children's participation can be seen as a desire than a fact (Tuukkanen, et.al., 2012; Helwig and Turiel, 2002). Children's social and political judgements are differentiated by domain and their social interactions are shaped by relations with peers and authority figures throughout development. Children's experiences are important to understand their social and moral judgements (Helwig and Turiel, 2002). Thus, it is required that to explore their experiences about rights and to correlate them with their views and judgements about rights. Children's judgements and reasoning show early understanding of concepts in the context of democracy and rights (Kohlberg, 1981).

It is important to teach children to be active citizens. Research also shows that knowledge and awareness about the rights may contribute children's well-being and life satisfaction. Casas et.al. (2022) mentioned that perceptions related to children's rights and participate in decisions affecting children. Children's views on their rights don't translate directly in public policy recommendations because of their cognitive ability and competence levels but any public policy in the area of children should need to take into account their perspectives (Helwig and Turies, 2002).

Kosher and Ben-Arieh (2017) found that 52% of children know their rights and aware of UNCR and reported knowing about this. Af Ursin and Haanpaa (2018) mentioned 45% of children know what rights children had and only 32% aware of UNCR. Rights based experiences are important in awareness and understanding of themselves as right holders for children and Dunhill (2018) mentioned that learning about rights in schools is unclear unless embedded in practice. Traditional school where teachers, curricula and others tend to overemphasize responsibilities than rights students cannot use vocabulary of rights. Lo et al. (2015) explained in sample of Hong Kong that, many schools claim that they give students freedom but they tend to listen to the opinions except teachers and the school.

Munongi and Pillay (2018) asked 9 grade pupils from secondary schools in Johannesburg to write their views on their thoughts and results indicated that they were aware of their rights, but adults were still violating them. Kosher (2018) also found that children's actual participation level was associated with their parents' attitudes. Ben-Arieh and Khoury-Kassabri (2010) reported that values and practices of the families are significantly correlated with the wives and the approaches in the context of the children's rights.

All people included marginalized groups claim some rights for themselves through history. Unlike them it is not children claiming rights for themselves but adults claiming rights for children (Philips, 2011). Children don't have rights such as owning their properties or voting. Children's citizenship means children experience in society. In this research, it is seen that majority of the participants viewed that UNCR was sufficient and didn't need any extra rights while some of them explained

towards their needs for adult rights like voting and having a driving license. This result can be interpreted in the context of participants inadequacy about skills like critical thinking, creativity, decision making and reflective thinking. As seen in Table 1 and 2 they have enough information about their rights, but they cannot evaluate them in real life environments and cannot make any suggestions. Thus, we can suggest to teachers that develop their thinking skills and to researchers that correlate those skills with suggestions about abstract issues. The reason for this result could be attributed to their ages (10 years-olds), but children between the ages of 10-14 years are asked their views about poverty in their country (Uganda) and they were highly critical of the performance of local government (Witter and Bukokhe, 2007).

Children need to be given voice, to be able to have a say in construction and development of documents and decisions about themselves. In UNCR Article 2 defines to express children's views freely in all matters affecting the child. Their views being given due weight in accordance with the age (Synodi, 2023). Age related and comparative studies should be done to see the effect of the age in issues about children's rights. According to UN (1989) every child has the right to participate and to have their voices heard. This study illustrates the importance of understanding of rights by their owners. Being able to express views in matters concerning children is also an important component of children's citizenship. Thus, there is need for how young children understand their rights in different contexts. Future work would also benefit from age, socio-economic-background and culture related research from both qualitative and quantitative research. Longitudinal studies on children's cognitive and social development about rights are needed too. Family and school environments may give expanded opportunities to investigate their participation levels and situations in the context of rights. Besides, not only misconceptions of children adults' misconceptions about children should also be understood to better promote children' well-being and citizenship.

Children are living in the borders of the Earth's natural system like adults and discussions on climate crisis in the context of the children's rights is a newly issue. Environmental problems negatively affect children's access to essential services. Globally, nearly half of the children in the world are more vulnerable than adults to those disasters (Rees, 2021). However, children have not been adequately included in climate change related decisions at a global level (Vaghri, 2018). Thus, research is needed to determine the effects of the climate change and environmental hazards on children's lives. Besides, new articles are developments in UNCR are also needed to help overcoming those issues.

Digital technologies effect children's lives, and they are also causes for both new opportunities and risks for children. Digital technologies and the social media can no longer be ignored in the context of UNCR. AS cited by (Lievens, et.al, 2018), protection, participation and provision rights are very much interlinked and to protect children in digital environments they must be actively and meaningfully involved in formulation, implementation and revision of those rights. One of the limitations of the study is that questions related to current issues such as technology climate change, poverty and migration were not included in this study.

5 Statement of Researchers

5.1 Researchers contribution rate statement:

Each researcher invested equal dedication and effort in this study, with collaborative decision-making at every investigation stage

5.2 Conflict statement

The authors affirm the absence of conflicts of interest.

5.3 Support and thanks

No support was received.

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