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Social Studies Teacher Candidates' Views on Environmental Justice¹

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Abstract

Environmental justice, which is related to the concept of social justice; It can be defined as the equal protection of everyone from harmful environmental influences, regardless of their age, culture, ethnicity, gender and race. Therefore, the right to live in a safe and healthy environment is the main emphasis of environmental justice. In addition, the participation of citizens in the decisions to be taken on environmental issues and taking into account their concerns about the environment are important aspects of the concept of environmental justice. The focus of the social studies course on daily life, its geographical, human and social analysis of environmental issues and its aim of citizenship education carry this course to an important place in gaining the understanding of environmental justice to individuals. For this reason, social studies teachers are expected to be aware of the concept of environmental justice and to carry out activities that can improve this concept in their students. The aim of this research is to determine the environmental justice views of social studies teacher candidates. The data of this study, which was carried out in the basic qualitative research design, were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed inductively. It is seen that social studies teacher candidates define environmental justice as fair distribution of resources, protection of natural resources and animals, high quality of life and being equidistant from dangers. Pre-service teachers who stated that environmental justice education will raise conscious and environmentally friendly individuals think that this concept is directly related to social studies. In line with the results of the study, pre-service teachers suggest placing the concept of environmental justice in the social studies curriculum and creating examples of activities that teachers can benefit from in line with this concept.

Keywords: Social studies, Environmental justice, Teacher education, Social justice



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INTRODUCTION

Most negative situations and practices faced by any individual and group in daily life lead one to the concept of social justice. Although the emergence of this concept dates back to Ancient Greeks, the understanding of social justice as it is today, having followed various stages of development over time, deals with many social facts and events. The concept itself can be defined in different ways. Bell (2007, p. 4) defines social justice as: *"Equal distribution of resources in the society, making all individuals feel physically and psychologically safe and peaceful, and thus, their full and equal participation in democratic decision-making processes while having a sense of responsibility towards other people and societies."*

The fact that the concept of social justice has strengthened in recent years has both positive and negative meanings. Even though higher levels of awareness regarding social justice create a positive consequence, the spread of this concept can also be interpreted as an increase in practices that do not comply with the understanding of social justice in societies. The modern understanding of social justice focuses on many social facts and events such as racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, prejudice against people with disabilities, class discrimination, and the environment (Blackmore, 2009; Gorski, 2008; Schweik, 2009). In this respect, the environment constitutes one of the primary dimensions of social justice education in social studies (Wade, 2007). Accordingly, in the social studies course, it is deemed important to consider the natural environment and all living creatures as well as places with cultural and historical heritage as the common value of humanity and to raise students' awareness with regard to the fact that all human beings will be adversely affected if all these are damaged.

Environmental justice is one of the concepts related to the environment that is a basic dimension of social justice education. Promoting the awareness of social justice in individuals enhances their idea of a sustainable environment (Mohai, Pellow & Roberts, 2009). In a similar vein, the movement of environmental justice also aims to ensure social justice by building a sustainable ecosystem. The foundations of this concept were laid with the toxic waste problem that attracted attention in the United States in the 1980s (Holifield, 2001). It is known that three-quarters of the hazardous waste landfills in the USA at that time were located in regions where African-Americans lived or in regions where individuals with low socio-economic status lived (GAO, 1983). The fact that class and ethnic origin have a primary effect on the physical conditions of the environment where one lives has led to the emergence of this concept. The understanding of environmental justice has developed with the increase of industrialization and consumption of natural resources in addition to the rapid rise of the human population around the world. Such negative aspects not only increase the environmental destruction but also cause people to live in unhealthy conditions. In the following process, the framework of the concept, environmental justice, has expanded, and many social phenomena have been included in its scope. In this respect, the concept of environmental justice is defined as *"the right to equal access to a clean environment and equal protection from possible environmental damage, regardless of race, income, class or another socio-economic status"* (Cutter, 1995, p. 111). In another definition, environmental justice refers to the state that all individuals have the right to equal protection in environmental and health-related laws and practices (Bullard, 2000).

The understanding of environmental justice differs from the widely accepted environmental protection movements across the world. It not only deals with environmental protection but also integrates environmentalism with the social needs of people. Moreover, it has the spirit of fighting against capitalist economic growth that progresses by damaging the environment (Brulle & Pellow, 2006). The modern and currently-accepted understanding of environmental justice integrates with human rights and supports the progress of democratization in societies (Mohai, Pellow & Roberts, 2009). In addition, the idea of environmental justice aims to eliminate the negative effects of industrial zones on the environment, to include the environmental NGOs in decision-making processes, develop a sustainable conception of the environment, protect the natural environment with its living creatures, and at the same time, provide social justice at the same time. Furthermore, the earnings from the use of underground and aboveground resources that constitute the environment, and sharing the benefits and harms brought by such production processes are among the important aspects of the environment (Hadi, 2015).

Raising the awareness of new generations about environmental justice is considered important in the strengthening of social justice, the development of human rights and democracy, as well as raising environmentally conscious generations. The social studies course has a significant place in providing this education to individuals (Öztürk & Zayimoğlu Öztürk, 2016). This is because issues such as social justice, human rights, and democracy in the context of citizenship are important parts of the content of the social studies course. Additionally, it is among the target competencies to be developed in individuals through this course. For this reason, including the concept of environmental justice in social studies education is of great importance for both teacher candidates and secondary school students. By training teachers equipped with this concept, students can become individuals who are more conscious about the environment. However, in the literature, no studies seem to have focused on environmental justice and social studies teacher candidates. In her study, Okur-Berberoğlu (2015) took the opinions of teachers on ecopedagogy-based environmental education, that considered environmental justice as necessary. It has been concluded that teachers have an ecopedagogical point of view. In other words, it was concluded that teachers see themselves as a part of the world. On the other hand, this concept has been investigated in various studies in educational sciences (Alexander, et al., 2021; Bowser & Cid, 2021; Dittmer et al., 2018; Holiday, 2020; Jimenez, Moorhead & Wilensky, 2021; Karetny, 2017; Olson, 2018; Ontiveros, 2015; Sadeh, 2006; Sammel, 2004). In these studies, the views of students from different levels on environmental justice were taken, and the concept of environmental justice was examined in relation to concepts such as social justice, environmental education, and ecological education, and students were engaged in out-of-school activities that would strengthen environmental justice. It is noteworthy that these studies in the field of education, focusing on the concepts of environmental justice and its instruction, have increased in recent years. This can be interpreted as an increase in individuals' awareness of environmental justice in the field of education. In this context, the present study set out to determine social studies teacher candidates' views on environmental justice. The following research questions were addressed based on this aim:

- 1) How do social studies teacher candidates define social justice and environmental justice?
- 2) What do social studies teacher candidates think about the relationship between social justice and environmental justice?
- 3) What do social studies teacher candidates think about the place of environmental justice in social studies education?
- 4) How do social studies teacher candidates evaluate their undergraduate education in terms of their acquisition of environmental justice?

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METHOD

Basic qualitative research design was employed in this study to investigate social studies teacher candidates' views on environmental justice. In this design, the main purpose is to reveal the semantic constructs of participants about a research topic and to interpret these constructs from various aspects (Merriam, 2009). The research topic in the present study is environmental justice, a primary concept in the literature on social justice, and social studies teacher candidates' views regarding this concept were investigated from various aspects. In this way, the semantic constructs of teacher candidates about the place of environmental justice in social studies education, as well as their views on environmental justice itself, would be revealed.

Participants

The purposive sampling method was used to determine the participants in accordance with the qualitative research approach (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Therefore, teacher candidates who were in the last year of their undergraduate education were participated in the study since they took a significant part of the courses in the social studies teacher training program. A total of 11 social studies teacher candidates, five male, and six female, constitute the study group of the study. Social studies teacher

candidates were participated in the study on a voluntary basis, and they were informed that could leave whenever they wanted. In addition, all participants in the study were given pseudo names. The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Information about the participants*

Participant Code Name	Gender	Age	Participant Code Name	Gender	Age
Sezer	M	19	Esra	F	19
Seda	F	19	Ayhan	M	20
Mete	M	20	Arzu	F	20
Serap	F	21	Burak	M	19
Meryem	M	20	Berrak	F	19
Ahmet	F	20			

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected through interviews with social studies teacher candidates. Eleven social studies teacher candidates were involved in the process of semi-structured interviews. Interviews that are one of the main data collection methods in the qualitative research approach provide researchers with the opportunity to have an in-depth understanding of the topic (Glesne, 2013; Merriam, 2009). On the other hand, semi-structured interviews are convenient for additional questions during the data collection process and allow researchers to adapt to new situations that arise spontaneously (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In order to prepare the interview questions, the literature on social justice, environmental justice, and social studies was firstly reviewed, and draft interview questions were developed accordingly. The questions were then finalized in line with the opinions of two experts with doctorates in the field of social studies. Using the semi-structured interview questions, 11 social studies teacher candidates were interviewed, and the research data were collected. A single interview was made with the social studies teacher candidates and the interviews were recorded.

Different methods can be used in the analysis of qualitative data obtained through interviews. The data of the present study were analyzed by adopting an inductive approach. In this approach, researchers try to reach a new whole based on the data set they have. In other words, codes, themes, and the holistic structure that emerges with their combination form the basis of this analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In the data analysis, the NVivo12 qualitative data analysis package program was used in this study.

As the teacher candidates participated in this study on a voluntary basis, their consent was obtained for data collection. They were told that they could leave the process at any stage and that their real names and identity would not be used. In order to ensure trustworthiness of the study, the author of this paper who gained his expertise on social justice and has many papers published on this topic analyzed the data set firstly, and then some of the data were analyzed by an independent expert. The codes and themes yielded as a result of the analyses were compared and a high level of agreement was observed between the two analyses, which was followed by reporting the findings of the study. Pseudo names were used when direct quotations were included in the presentation of the findings.

FINDINGS

The findings revealed as a result of the data analysis are presented under different headings in parallel with the aims of the study. These headings include the definition of social justice, relationship between social justice and environment, definition of environmental justice, environmental justice education, environmental justice in social studies education, evaluation of undergraduate education in the context of its contribution to environmental justice.

1. Definiton of Social Justice:

The first of the findings pertain to the social studies teacher candidates' definitions of social justice. The teacher candidates used many concepts while defining social justice. In this regard, the

majority of the participants used the concept of equality to define social justice. With respect to equality, the participants emphasized equality before the law, equality in terms of rights, equality in daily life, and equality in social life. One of the participants, Mete, defined social justice as *"the type of justice that indicates that everyone in society should have equal rights"*. On the other hand, Ahmet defined it as *"treating everyone equally, regardless of person"*. The teacher candidates' definitions of social justice are shown in Figure 1.

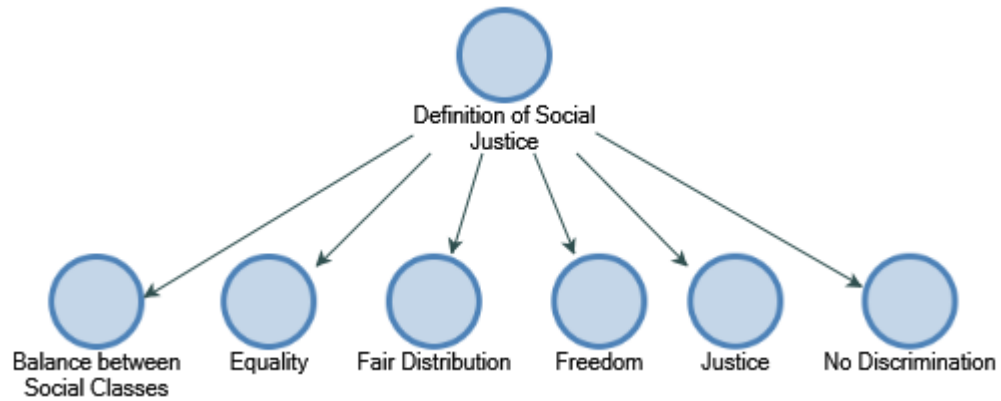


Figure 1. Definition of Social Justice

As is seen in Figure 1, while defining the concept of social justice, some of the participants highlighted the concepts of non-discrimination, justice, balance between classes, fair distribution, and freedom in addition to equality. The most used concept after equality was non-discrimination. One participant, Ayhan, mentioned *"no discrimination in the public sphere"* in her definition of social justice, while Berrak explained it as *"not being marginalized or exposed to discrimination"*. Unlike the other participants, Serap indicated that social justice was related to the balance between classes, and said, *"Many people from different social classes live in our society. The less the difference between the living standards and quality of life among these people, the more social justice we can talk about."* These statements show that almost all of the teacher candidates featured the equality of people in various areas while defining the concept of social justice. However, there was not sufficient emphasis on the environmental dimension in their definitions of social justice.

2. Relationship Between Social Justice and Environment:

Another finding of the study is about the connection that the social studies teacher candidates established between social justice and the environment. In this context, all the teacher candidates stated that social justice was directly related to the environment. Although most of the teacher candidates said that they saw social justice as related to the environment, their explanations of this connection seemed insufficient. While some of the teacher candidates indicated that social justice was related to the environmental protection and environmental awareness, two teacher candidates directly referred to the literature on environmental justice to explain the relationship between social justice and the environment. When explaining the relationship of social justice with the environment, Mete, one of the participants, said, *"We cannot talk about social justice if individuals are unconscious about the environment"*. Another student, Esra, explained that this connection existed because the environment affected human life by saying *"Social justice is related to the environment. The attitudes of individuals towards the environment also affect the living conditions of other individuals."* Unlike the other participants, Berrak who talked about the different effects of the benefits and harms of the environment on the economic groups in the society summarized the relationship between social justice and environment as follows: *"Not everyone is equally affected by the problems in the environment. The poor have more exposure to environmental problems."* Similarly, Burak emphasized that the positive and negative reflections of the environment on people were affected by social class. With regard to the relationship between social justice and the environment, Burak said the following:

I do think they are related. We can give nuclear power plants as an example. While some people live in a low-radiation area, some people can continue their lives without being exposed to any radiation. Or we can mention global warming. While people in some regions are greatly affected by global warming and take their precautions, people who are less affected by global warming continue their lives without even caring about it.

Although all of the teacher candidates stated that social justice has a relationship with environmental issues, only a few chose to explain this relationship. Of the participants, Esra, Berrak, and Burak established connections that are close to the ones explained in the literature when they explained the relationship between social justice and the environment.

3. Definition of Environmental Justice:

Another finding obtained from the views of the teacher candidates is related to the definitions of environmental justice. Almost half of the teacher candidates made statements about environmental justice in parallel to the literature, whereas the remaining some of teacher candidates did not express anything regarding the definition of the concept. The concepts related to the candidates' definitions of environmental justice are presented in Figure 2.

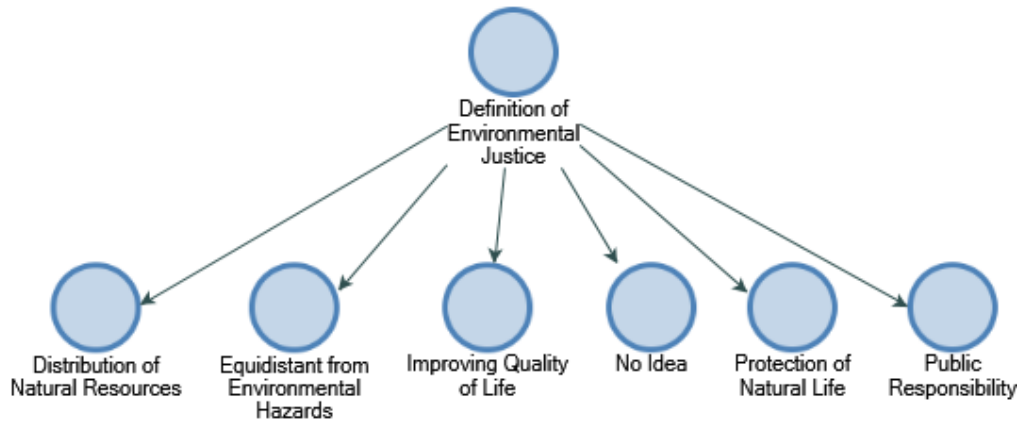


Figure 2. Definition of Environmental Justice

As is seen in Figure 2, while defining environmental justice, the teacher candidates mentioned the distribution of natural resources, protection of natural life, being in equal distance from environmental hazards, increasing the quality of life, and the public responsibility for ensuring environmental justice. The most frequently mentioned issue in the definition of environmental justice was the distribution of resources. One of the participants, Berrak, defined environmental justice as *"the equal use of clean environment and water by everyone, and the protection of these resources"*. Similarly, Meryem highlighted the issue of resource distribution and made the following definition: *"It is the ethical and fair use of renewable resources. It aims to ensure that people benefit equally from adequate environmental resources and is about the fact that damage to various regions has universal consequences"*. In addition to the distribution of natural resources, another participant, Ahmet, touched upon the issue of being in equal distance from environmental benefits and harms. When he defined environmental justice, he said, *"the areas that are beneficial and harmful for the public can be about the fairness in distribution. Moreover, one can argue that it is contradictory to environmental justice if the places where poor people live are not given any value, and those where the rich live take all the investment."* The issue of being in equal distance to environmental benefits and harms was also mentioned by Mete who said, *"I think environmental justice is about people having equal rights, regardless of their religion, language or race, and them being in equal distance from all kinds of danger."* Esra, another participant, stated that, unlike other teacher candidates, the necessity of protecting natural life and the environmental problems experienced can cause people with environmental awareness to live with these problems unjustly. Her views about this issue are as follows:

The holistic principle of ecology says that nature is a whole and everything occurring in nature is related to each other. Every individual in the society can contribute to the environment in a good or bad way.

When people pollute the environment, they also take other people's right to a healthy life. Environmental justice can be defined as all living species having the right to live in a clean environment.

Finally, another participant, Arzu, talked about official authorities in the context of environmental justice. While describing environmental justice, she emphasized the responsibilities of public institutions and organizations, and said the following:

It is about the prevention of discrimination in the society by public institutions, individuals' benefiting from the resources around them adequately, and the provision of environmental justice by public institutions in a way that is necessary, with the thought that every person is a member of the society.

Nearly half of the teacher candidates who participated in the study could not express any opinion on defining environmental justice. On the other hand, the other half tried to define the concept in a way that is parallel to the literature on environmental justice.

4. Environmental Justice Education

The findings regarding the social studies teacher candidates' views on environmental justice education are reported in this section. The teacher candidates' views on teaching concepts such as environmental justice to secondary school students were taken to determine how they perceive the benefits and difficulties that this process would bring. The teacher candidates mentioned many benefits of teaching children the concept of environmental justice, as well as certain difficulties that can be encountered in instruction. The benefits and difficulties of environmental justice education are presented in Figure 3.

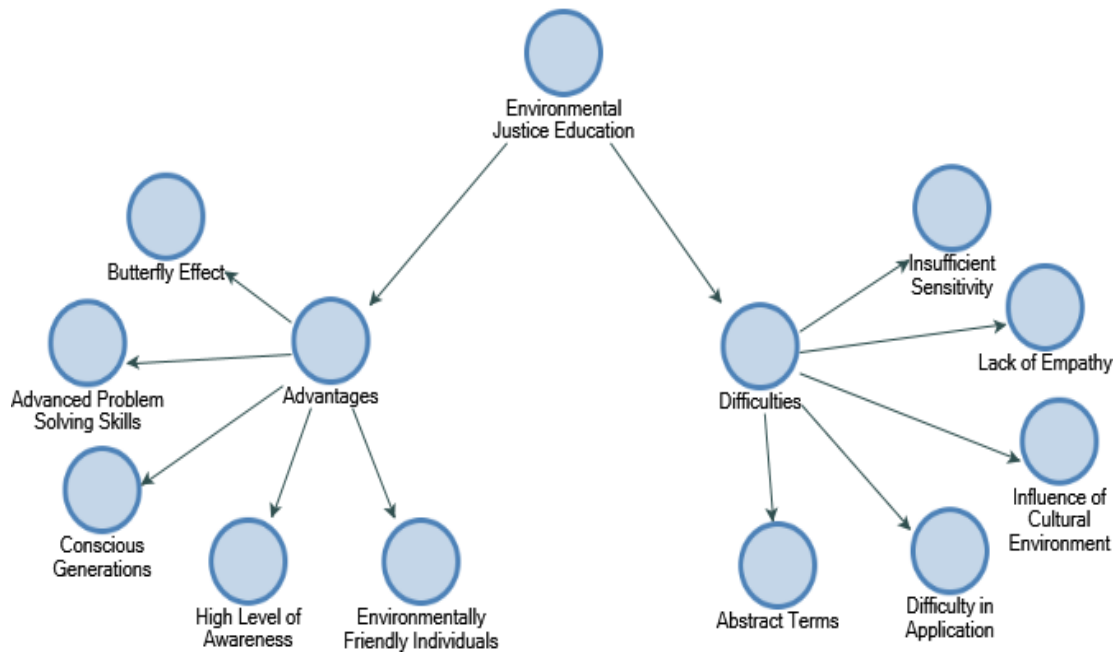


Figure 3. Advantages and Difficulties of Environmental Justice Education

As is seen in Figure 3, the teacher candidates mentioned some benefits of environmental justice education. Among these, raising conscious generations was the most frequently mentioned. They also touched upon the issue of raising environmentally-friendly individuals who have developed problem-solving skills and have a high level of awareness. The thought that the effects of environmental justice education would spread to the society in the form of a butterfly effect was also stated by one of the teacher candidates. Using similar statements, Burak, Mete, and Serap indicated that teaching children the concept of environmental justice at an early age would make them more conscious individuals. Another participant, Ahmet, tried to explain the benefits of environmental justice education by saying, "The benefit of environmental justice will be raising awareness in children and their efforts to make the world a better place". Likewise, Esra and Berrak thought that environmental justice education would raise environmentally-friendly individuals. Esra explained one of the benefits of environmental justice by saying, "Children who are conscious of environmental justice do not harm nature. They act out to prevent environmental problems in the future." Unlike other participants, Ayhan believed that the benefits for

children through environmental justice education would spread to the environment. She said, *"The benefits of environmental justice education include raising awareness in children and creating a butterfly effect."*

Although environmental justice education has many advantages, there are also some difficulties that may be encountered in the implementation process. The difficulty that was most frequently mentioned by the participants was that the concept could be abstract for children. In addition, the difficulties that may be experienced in practice, students' not being able to show empathy and sensitivity, and the effect of the cultural environment were other issues mentioned by the participants. Ayhan, Seda, and Arzu argued that the concept of environmental justice could seem abstract to students, and be difficult to achieve long-term learning. Arzu explained her view by saying, *"There may be a problem when teaching environmental justice to children because these issues are a bit abstract."* Students' inability to show sufficient sensitivity and empathy about environmental justice was another difficulty that might be experienced. Burak touched upon the same topic by saying, *"Because of their young age, children may not pay attention to such matters or do not take them very seriously."* In a similar vein, Meryem explained that the lack of empathy in some students might cause difficulties in teaching concepts such as environmental justice. She said, *"Since some students cannot be competent in empathizing on issues such as environmental justice, the information we will provide may be insufficient."* Unlike the other participants, Serap thought that the cultural environment of students in their daily life, outside the school, would directly affect their approach to issues such as environmental justice. She stated her argument by saying, *"If the concept of environmental justice is taught to children when they are young, it will be easier for them to grow up with this understanding. However, not every student comes from the same social environment and students are reflections of the environment they come from. That's why not all students approach environmental justice in the same way."*

5. Environmental Justice in Social Studies Education

The findings regarding the teacher candidates' views on environmental justice in social studies education are presented in this section. In this respect, the teacher candidates explained the relationship between social studies and the concept of environmental justice, and then stated their views on in what subjects this concept can be presented to students in the social studies course and what techniques can be employed in instruction. With regard to the social studies course and environmental justice, almost all the teacher candidates referred to a direct relationship. The frequently mentioned connection was that the social studies course was related to life and directly dealt with many social problems. In this sense, the teacher candidates argued that the understanding of environmental justice was included in the social studies course. One of the participants, Serap said, *"In terms of social studies, it is a course intertwined with life, and justice is an inseparable part of life. Therefore, when appropriate, the importance of environmental justice should be highlighted."* With similar expressions, Esra explained the relationship of the social studies course with many concepts related to environmental justice by saying, *"Social Studies course is one of the primary courses in which outcomes such as equality, justice, not wasting resources, protection of the natural environment can be gained."* Another participant, Berrak, talked about environmental education and environmental problems, and indicated that such social problems were significant matters for the social studies course: *"I think the most appropriate course in which environmental education and environmental problems can be explained is the social studies course. I think this concept should be covered in order to raise individuals who are responsible for the environment."*

Apart from the other participants, Seda highlighted the relationship between environmental justice and citizenship and established its connection with social studies through citizenship. She said, *"This is an issue that should attract the attention of all individuals and teachers in the field. Social studies teachers should focus on this subject within subjects such as citizenship, rights, and responsibilities that directly affect life. Young people should be made aware of this."* Moreover, Mete thought that social studies teachers should address the concept of environmental justice, and said, *"They should encourage it because we need environmental justice for a better society and world in the future."* Finally, another participant, Meryem, argued that the social studies course had an important place in providing basic information about concepts such as environmental justice by saying, *"Social studies course is the*

intersection point of many sciences. This course is the second step in preparing students for life after family education and helping them have an idea about such matters."

In addition to the relationship of the social studies course with environmental justice, the subjects in which this concept can be addressed within the course were also examined. In this regard, the teacher candidates stated that environmental justice can be covered within many subjects in the social studies course. The subjects in which environmental justice can be addressed in the social studies course based on the teacher candidates' views are presented in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Issues Related to Environmental Justice in Social Studies Course

As is seen in Figure 4, the teacher candidates asserted that many subjects in the social studies course were related to environmental justice. The most frequently mentioned subjects were justice, equality, environmental protection, natural resources, and sensitivity. One of the participants, Ayhan, stated that that environmental justice was related to environmental protection within the social studies course, and should be given to students in this subject. He said the following:

Environmental justice is a situation that concerns nature. For instance, cutting trees without even thinking about it cause serious damage, and as a result, severe penalties can be given for harming nature. I think there should be issues related to environmental and social justice about which students should be made aware and encouraged to take action in social studies course. It would even be much better if it was in all grade levels.

Other subjects mentioned by the teacher candidates were mostly about citizenship or environmental protection in the social studies course. These includes NGOs, responsibility, recycling, children's rights, waste, and overconsumption. One of the participants, Berrak said, "the impact of excessive consumption on the environment can be emphasized", whereas Burak said, "successful recycling projects can be mentioned as examples". The participants' statements show that many of the subjects in the social studies course can be exploited to enable an understanding of environmental justice in students. Furthermore, four of the teacher candidates stated that environmental justice could be added to the social studies content as a separate subject by itself.

With regard to the instructional approaches that can be used to provide environmental justice education in the social studies course, the teacher candidates mentioned many methods and techniques. The most emphasized practices were active learning techniques and social project studies. The participants' views on the methods and techniques that can be used to teach environmental justice in the social studies course are presented in Figure 5.

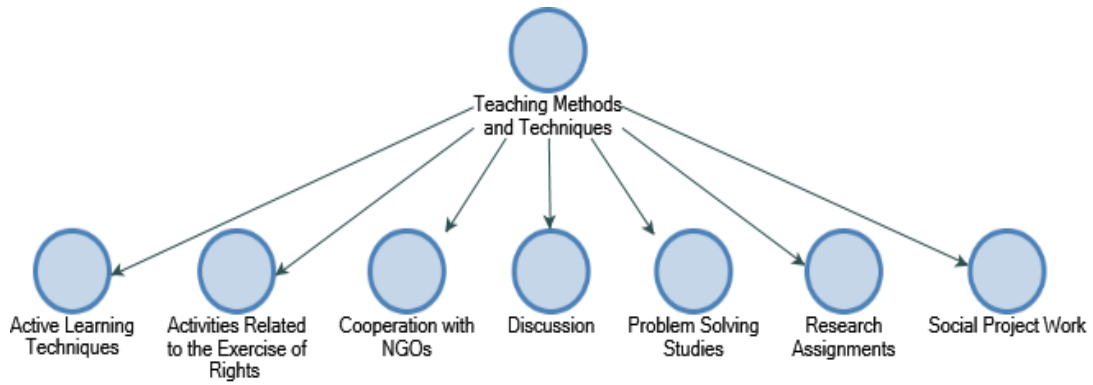


Figure 5. Teaching Methods and Techniques

As is seen in Figure 5, the teacher candidates mentioned many methods and techniques which mainly include active learning techniques and social project studies. Ayhan says, "If we focus on this issue sufficiently and do more projects, it can lead to awareness". Likewise, Seda said, "We can make the society more livable by helping individuals understand these concepts by means of more social projects." In addition, the teacher candidates stated that social studies teachers can make use of a variety of practices such as discussion, problem-solving activities, field trip, research assignments, activities related to the use of rights and cooperation with NGOs. Arzu argued that the use of rights in daily life can be emphasized in the social studies course by saying, "More activities should be done on where and how individuals can use their social and environmental rights in daily life at a level that is fair and sufficient. Moreover, these issues should be given more space in the social studies curriculum."

Unlike the other participants, Berrak stated that establishing cooperation with NGOs in the social studies course was effective in improving students' understanding of environmental justice. She said, "I think this subject should not be explained theoretically only by using books. Students should be introduced to TEMA (Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion). Visits to the waste collection facilities should be organized by contacting local authorities." Almost all of the teacher candidates emphasized that there was a direct relationship between the social studies course and environmental justice, and this relationship overlapped with the aim, content, and primary instructional methods of the course.

6. Evaluating Undergraduate Education For its Contribution to the Understanding of Environmental Justice

The last finding of the present study is about the teacher candidates' evaluation of their undergraduate education based on outcomes regarding environmental justice. In this sense, almost all of the teacher candidates regarded their undergraduate education as insufficient in terms of gaining an understanding of environmental justice. Serap, one of the participants, asserted that the courses she took were limited in terms of gaining theoretical knowledge of environmental justice, and relevant practical work, by saying the following:

I don't think environmental justice is a topic that gets much attention. Theoretical knowledge is limited to the ideal perception of teaching. Environmental justice that is a part of social life, or what can be done to achieve justice is not addressed sufficiently because people are distant from what's happening in reality.

Another participant, Sezer said, "I don't think we have covered the theoretical part," while Meryem said, "I haven't taken a course on these topics so far." Meryem also stated that her insights regarding environmental justice were as a result of her personal efforts: "We did not work on this issue in detail. We didn't exchange views related to environmental justice. We thus benefit from our personal experience." Similarly, Arzu also thought that information regarding environmental justice was limited in courses but should be covered to a larger extent by saying, "Because we will be teachers, including these subjects in undergraduate courses can be considered as a requirement of our field and it will be our duty to convey them to future generations. I think it is important and necessary for us."

Two of the participants thought that the education they received was sufficient in terms of some achievements related to environmental justice, but it was limited in some aspects. Esra, one of these

participants, summarized her thoughts by saying, "Concepts such as environment, ecology, and our ecological footprint were discussed in our Geography and Sustainable Development courses. But these topics could have been addressed in more detail." The other participant, Seda, stated that although courses were theoretically sufficient, there were some limitations in terms of practical aspects. She said, "Although the theoretical instruction was sufficient within the scope of this subject, more awareness could be raised by giving much more examples from social life." After examining the views of the social studies teacher candidates on environmental justice from various perspectives, the results of the study were obtained and suggestions were offered.

RESULT, DISCUSSION and SUGGESTIONS

In the present study, many results have been revealed with regard to the social studies teacher candidates' views on environmental justice. The first of these results is related to the teacher candidates' definitions of the concept of social justice. Most of the candidates provided various definitions by emphasizing different aspects of the concept of social justice. In their definitions, they often used concepts such as equality, non-discrimination, and justice. These concepts that the teacher candidates used were consistent with the literature on social justice literature overlaps with. In many studies, these concepts are frequently used when defining social justice (Allen, 1997; Gaudelli, 2001; Lewis, 2001; Rosner-Salazar, 2003). On the other hand, the teacher candidates did not mention the environmental dimension while describing social justice. Another result reached in the study is on the relationship between social justice and the environment. However, there are many studies in the literature that reveal that the concept of social justice is related to the natural environment (Holifeld, 2001; Johnston, 2016; Leach, Stirling and Scoones, 2010; Wade, 2007). Although all of the teacher candidates mentioned the environmental dimension in a limited way when describing social justice, they stated that social justice was related to the environment. Yet, they had difficulty explaining this connection, and only a few teacher candidates were able to establish a limited connection, while the rest did not state any opinions. This explains the fact that they did not mention the environmental dimension while defining social justice. The fact that they encountered limited content on social justice in the teacher training program may explain this situation.

Another result of the study relates to the teacher candidates' definitions of environmental justice. Half of the participants could not provide a proper definition of environmental justice, while the other half could define the concept in a limited way. In these definitions, they often referred to the protection of the natural environment and the distribution of resources. This overlaps with many definitions of environmental justice in the literature (Jimenez, Moorhead and Wilensky, 2021; Karetny, 2017). Similarly, Bowser and Cid (2021) concluded in their study that the issue of access to natural resources has become an important part of environmental injustices. In addition, Kılıç and Tok (2014), state that the understanding of environmental justice includes the management and sharing of world resources. However, there were some aspects mentioned in a limited way in the teacher candidates' definitions of environmental justice. Their definitions did not include references to many dimensions that constitute the concept of environmental justice such as socio-economic distinctions, environment-related legal regulations, the effects of climate change on different groups, the problems experienced by groups in areas with noise pollution, the problem of waste, being away from radiation and negative situations in the environment (Holiday, 2020; Jimenez, Moorhead & Wilensky, 2021; Olson, 2018; Ontiveros, 2015). In this respect, that the definitions of the teacher candidates regarding environmental justice were limited.

The teacher candidates who thought that it was important to teach environmental justice to children stated that such education would contribute to raising environmentally-friendly individuals with a high level of awareness. Consistent with this result, Dittmer et al. (2018) reported that environmental justice education increased the levels of awareness and taking action. Similarly, Sammel (2004) reported that teachers stated that students' awareness levels would increase and they would become individuals who are politically aware if subjects such as social and environmental justice were covered in the classroom. Furthermore, Alexander et al. (2021) reached the conclusion that teaching these concepts at

the undergraduate level would increase students' questioning skills regarding real social life outside of academic environments. Despite many advantages of environmental justice education, the teacher candidates thought that the concept being potentially abstract for lower age groups would be the most important difficulty. Considering the cognitive developmental periods of children at the secondary school level, most of the fifth and sixth graders are in the concrete operational period according to Piaget's classification (Santrock, 2021). On the other hand, most of the children in the seventh and eighth graders transition to the abstract operational period. It can be argued that the teacher candidates' views are in line with this classification and abstract concepts such as environmental justice could be taught more effectively in the latter half of secondary school.

Another result of the study is related to the relationship between the social studies course and the understanding of environmental justice. At this point, almost all of the teacher candidates thought that the social studies course is directly related to the understanding of this concept. The participants argued that this relationship is established because the social studies course involves environmental problems, social problems, justice, and equality. This overlaps with the results of many studies in the literature (Carleton-Hug & Hugs, 2010; Disinger, 1990; Ramsey, Hungerford & Volk, 1992; Stevenson, 2007). Moreover, by gaining insights about environmental justice, students get to know better the dynamics of the society and the world they live in, and they become more aware of the opportunities they have with those in the rest of the society. In this way, a development process similar to the objectives of the social studies course is experienced through environmental justice education (Ontiveros, 2015). However, the concept of environmental justice is not included in the contents of the courses in the social studies course curriculum and social studies teacher training programs. Although there are objectives of the curriculum that can be associated with environmental justice, the reflection of these objectives on achievements has been limited and only environmental problems and environmental awareness are addressed. This also applies to teacher training programs. The contents of the courses within teacher training programs contain environmental issues related to environmental justice, sustainable environment, and environmental awareness (MoNE, 2018; CoHE, 2018).

The teacher candidates stated that subjects related to NGOs, responsibility, and recycling, in addition to citizenship, could be effective to teach environmental justice students in the social studies course. They also argued that this understanding can be enabled in students if cooperation with NGOs can be used along with active learning techniques and social project works. In line with this result, many activities included in the collaborative environmental justice curriculum developed by Sadeh (2006) are based on active learning techniques, group work, observation, project work, and in-class activities. Similarly, Hens and Stoyanov (2014) also concluded that the trainings on this concept should be collaborative and based on problem-solving. Moreover, out-of-school activities and cooperation with different institutions in the teaching of environmental issues contribute to the effectiveness of teaching (Badem, 2010).

The last result drawn from the present study relates to the teacher candidates' evaluation of their undergraduate education in terms of learning about environmental justice. Accordingly, almost all of the teacher candidates stated that the courses they took during their undergraduate education were not adequate in terms of gaining an understanding of environmental justice and other related concepts. This can also be observed in the social studies teacher training program. Concepts such as environmental justice or social justice are not explicitly included in the course contents of the social studies teacher training program, and these target concepts are implicitly addressed to a limited extent (CoHE, 2018). On the other hand, Bowser and Cid (2021) concluded that enabling an understanding of environmental justice and social justice in students during undergraduate education would positively affect them in terms of solving environmental problems affecting the world and being the pioneer of this change. In this respect, it can be argued that the understanding of environmental justice has limited emphasis in social studies teacher education.

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

- Environmental justice should be emphasized in the social studies teacher training program and the social studies courses curriculum to a larger extent,

- Collaborative events should be organized with NGOs that work in relation to environmental justice in teacher education,
- Large-scale studies should be conducted to determine teacher candidates' levels of awareness with regard to environmental justice.

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Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmen Adaylarının Çevresel Adalet Görüşleri²

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Özet

Sosyal adalet kavramı ile ilişkili olan çevresel adalet; yaşları, kültürleri, etnik kökenleri, cinsiyetleri ve ırklarına bakılmaksızın herkesin zararlı çevresel etkilerden eşit derecede korunması olarak tanımlanabilir. Dolayısıyla güvenli ve sağlıklı bir çevre içinde yaşama hakkı çevresel adaletin temel vurgu noktasıdır. Buna ek olarak vatandaşların çevre ile ilgili konularda alınacak kararlara katılım gösterebilmesi, vatandaşların çevre konusundaki kaygılarının dikkate alınması gibi unsurlar da çevresel adalet kavramının önemli yanlarındandır. Çevresel adalet anlayışının bireylere kazandırılması konusunda eğitim kurumlarının yeri ve önemi yadsınamaz. Bu noktada sosyal bilgiler dersinin doğrudan gündelik yaşama odaklanması, çevre ile ilgili konuları coğrafi, beşerî ve sosyal olarak inceliyor olması ve vatandaşlık eğitimi amacı taşıyor olması bu dersi çevresel adalet anlayışının bireylere kazandırılmasında önemli bir yere taşımaktadır. Sosyal bilgiler dersinin içeriği dünyada yaşanan gelişmelere paralel olarak değişim göstermektedir. Buna göre son yıllarda gelişim gösteren çevresel adalet anlayışı da sosyal bilgiler eğitimi içerisinde yer edinmektedir. Bu nedenle sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin de çevresel adalet kavramının farkında olması ve öğrencilerinde bu kavramı geliştirebilecek türde etkinlikler yapması beklenmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalet görüşlerinin belirlenmesidir. Temel nitel araştırma deseniyle gerçekleştirilen bu çalışmanın verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ile elde edilmiştir. Veriler NVivo12 programı kullanılarak tümevarımsal bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adaleti; kaynakların adil dağıtılması, doğal kaynak ve hayvanların korunması, yaşam kalitesinin yüksek olması ve tehlikelere eşit uzaklıkta olmak şeklinde tanımladıkları görülmektedir. Çevresel adalet eğitimi ile bilinçli ve çevre dostu bireyler yetişeceğini ifade eden öğretmen adayları, bu kavramın sosyal bilgilerle doğrudan ilişkili olduğunu düşünmektedirler. Çalışmanın sonuçları doğrultusunda öğretmen adayları sosyal bilgiler öğretim programına çevresel adalet kavramının yerleştirilmesini ve bu kavram doğrultusunda öğretmenlerin yararlanabilecekleri etkinlik örneklerinin oluşturulmasını önermektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal bilgiler, Çevresel adalet, Öğretmen yetiştirme, Sosyal adalet



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Genişletilmiş Özet

Problem: Modern sosyal adalet anlayışı, çok sayıda toplumsal olgu ve olayla ilgilenmektedir. Irkçılık, cinsiyetçilik, homofobi, yabancı düşmanlığı, engellilere karşı önyargılı davranma, sınıf ayrımcılığı yapma ve çevre gibi konular bunlardan bazılarıdır (Blackmore, 2009; Gorski, 2008; Schweik, 2009). Bunlardan biri olan çevre konusu aynı zamanda sosyal bilgilerde sosyal adalet eğitiminin üç temel boyutundan birini oluşturmaktadır (Wade, 2007). Bu doğrultuda sosyal bilgiler dersinde doğal çevre ve canlıların yanı sıra kültürel ve tarihi öneme sahip mekânların insanlığın ortak değeri olarak görülmesi ve bu varlıklara karşı duyarlılık kazandırılması, bu varlıkların zarar görmesi durumunda tüm insanların bu durumdan olumsuz etkileneceğine ilişkin farkındalık yaratılması önemli görülmektedir. Sosyal adalet eğitiminin temel boyutlarından biri olan çevre ile ilişkili kavramlardan biri çevresel adalettir. Bireylerdeki sosyal adalet bilincinin güçlendirilmesi sürdürülebilir çevre fikrinin de güçlenmesini sağlamaktadır (Mohai, Pellow ve Roberts, 2009). Aynı şekilde çevresel adalet hareketi de sürdürülebilir bir ekosistemin inşası ile sosyal adaletin sağlanmasını amaçlamaktadır. Çevresel adalet kavramı: “Temiz bir çevreye eşit erişim hakkı ve olası çevre zararlarından ırk, maddi gelir, sınıf veya diğer sosyoekonomik statü ayrımlarına bakmaksızın eşit korunma” olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Cutter, 1995, s.111).

Çevresel adalet anlayışının yeni nesillere kazandırılması hem sosyal adaletin güçlenmesi hem de çevre konusunda bilinçli nesillerin yetişmesini sağlama konusunda önemli görülmektedir. Bu eğitimin sağlanması konusunda sosyal bilgiler dersi önemli bir yerdedir. Çünkü çevre konularının yanı sıra sosyal adalet gibi vatandaşlıkla ilgili konular sosyal bilgiler dersinin içeriğinin önemli parçalarındandır. Aynı zamanda sosyal bilgiler dersi ile vatandaşlara kazandırılması beklenen yeterlikler arasındadır (Öküzçüoğlu, 2019). Bu nedenle çevresel adalet kavramının sosyal bilgiler eğitiminde yer alması hem öğretmen adayları hem de ortaokul öğrencileri için önemli görülmektedir. Böylelikle daha donanımlı öğretmenler yetişmesinin yanı sıra bu öğretmenlerin de çevre konusunda daha bilinçli öğrenciler yetiştirecekleri düşünülmektedir. Alanyazında sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adayları ile çevresel adalet konusunda yapılmış herhangi bir çalışma yer almamaktadır. Buna karşın eğitim alanında yapılan bazı çalışmalarda çevresel adalet kavramının konu edinildiği görülmektedir (Alexander, vd., 2021; Bowser ve Cid, 2021; Dittmer vd., 2018; Holiday, 2020; Jimenez, Moorhead ve Wilensky, 2021; Karetny, 2017; Olson, 2018; Ontiveros, 2015; Sadeh, 2006; Sammel, 2004). Bu çalışmalarda farklı kademelerden öğrencilerin çevresel adaletle ilişkin görüşlerinin alındığı, çevresel adalet kavramının sosyal adalet, çevre eğitimi ve ekolojik eğitim gibi kavramlarla ilişkili olarak incelendiği ve öğrencilerin çevresel adaleti güçlendirecek okul dışı etkinliklerde bulunduğu görülmektedir. Çevresel adalet ve çevresel adalet eğitimi kavramlarını konu edinerek eğitim alanında yapılan bu çalışmaların son yıllarda artış gösterdiği dikkat çekmektedir. Bu durum eğitim alanında çevresel adalet kavramına ilişkin farkındalığın artış gösterdiği şeklinde yorumlanabilir. Bu araştırmada sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalet konusundaki görüşlerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem: Sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalet konusundaki görüşlerinin belirlendiği bu çalışma temel nitel araştırma desenine uygun olarak yapılmıştır (Merriam, 2009). Bu desen, bireylerin yaşamlarını nasıl yorumladıkları, oluşturdukları ve deneyimlerine ne anlam kattıkları üzerine odaklanmaktadır (Merriam, 2009). Çalışmanın katılımcılarının belirlenmesinde nitel araştırma yaklaşımına uygun olarak amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden yararlanılmıştır (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2013). Bu doğrultuda sosyal bilgiler öğretmenliği lisans programında yer alan derslerin önemli bir bölümünü almış oldukları için lisans eğitimlerinin son senesinde yer alan öğretmen adayları çalışmaya dâhil edilmiştir. Beşi erkek ve altısı kız olmak üzere toplam 11 sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adayı çalışma grubunu oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri ise yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ile toplanmıştır. Görüşme soruları araştırmacı tarafından alanyazın doğrultusunda hazırlanmış ve 2 uzman tarafından incelendikten sonra son halini almıştır. Bu sorular doğrultusunda 2021-2022 yılında sosyal bilgiler öğretmenliği lisans programının 3. sınıfında öğrenim gören 11 sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adayı ile görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Gönüllük esası ile çalışmada yer alan öğretmen adaylarıyla yapılan görüşmelerle elde edilen veriler, NVivo 12 paket programı kullanılarak tümevarımsal bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir. Bir diğer deyişle kodlar, temalar ve bunların birleşimi ile ortaya çıkan bütüncül yapı bu analizin temelini oluşturmaktadır (Braun ve Clarke, 2006; Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2013). Çalışmada elde edilen veri seti ilk olarak araştırmacı tarafından analiz edilmiş ardından başka bir uzman tarafından veri setinin %20’lik kısmının analiz edilmesi sağlanmıştır.

Analizler sonucu ulaşılan kod ve temalar karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde incelenmiş ve yapılan iki analiz arasında yüksek bir uyumun olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

Sonuçlar: Sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalete ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlendiği bu çalışma ile beraber pek çok sonuca ulaşılmıştır. Bu sonuçlardan ilki öğretmen adaylarının sosyal adalet kavramını tanımlamaları ile ilgilidir. Araştırmanın sonuçlarından ilkinde göre öğretmen adaylarının çoğunun sosyal adaleti eşitlik, ayrımcılık olmaması ve adalet kavramları ile tanımladıkları görülmektedir. Öğretmen adaylarının kullanmış olduğu bu kavramlar sosyal adalet alanyazını ile örtüşmektedir. Pek çok çalışmada sosyal adalet kavramı tanımlanırken bu kavramlardan sıklıkla yararlanılmaktadır (Allen, 1997; Gaudelli, 2001; Lewis, 2001; Rosner-Salazar, 2003). Buna karşın öğretmen adayları sosyal adaleti tanımlarken çevre boyutuna değinmemişlerdir. Oysaki alanyazında sosyal adalet kavramının doğal çevreyle ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koyan pek çok çalışma bulunmaktadır (Holifield, 2001; Johnston, 2016; Leach, Stirling ve Scoones, 2010; Wade, 2007). Sosyal adaletin çevre ile olan ilişkisi konusunda öğretmen adaylarının tamamına yakını sosyal adalet kavramının çevre ile bağlantılı olduğunu düşünmekte buna karşın bağlantıyı açıklama konusunda sınırlılıklar yaşamaktadırlar.

Çalışmanın bir diğer sonucu öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalet tanımlamaları ile ilgilidir. Katılımcıların yarısı çevresel adaleti tanımlama konusunda görüş belirtememiş, diğer yarısı ise kavramı sınırlı bir şekilde tanımlayabilmiştir. Bu tanımlamalarda sıklıkla doğal çevrenin korunmasına ve kaynakların dağıtımına değinmişlerdir. Bu durum alanyazında yer alan pek çok çevresel adalet tanımı ile örtüşmektedir (Jimenez, Moorhead ve Wilensky, 2021; Karetny, 2017). Benzer şekilde Bowser ve Cid (2021) çalışmalarında doğal kaynaklara erişim konusunun yaşanan çevresel adaletsizliklerin önemli bir parçası olmaya başladığı sonucuna ulaşmışlardır. Ancak öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalet tanımlarında sınırlı kalan kimi yanlar da bulunmaktadır. Çevresel adalet kavramını oluşturan sosyoekonomik ayrımlar, çevreyle ilgili yasal düzenlemeler, iklim değişikliğinin farklı gruplara olan etkileri, gürültü kirliliği olan bölgedeki grupların yaşadığı sorunlar, atıklar sorunu, radyasyon ve çevresel olumsuzluktan uzak olma gibi pek çok boyut, öğretmen adayları tarafından yapılan tanımlamalarda yer almamaktadır (Holiday, 2020; Jimenez, Moorhead ve Wilensky, 2021; Olson, 2018; Ontiveros, 2015). Bu doğrultuda öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalete ilişkin tanımlamalarının sınırlı kaldığını söylemek mümkündür. Çevresel adalet eğitimi ile bilinçli ve çevre dostu bireyler yetiştirildiğini ifade eden öğretmen adayları, bu kavramın sosyal bilgilerle doğrudan ilişkili olduğunu düşünmektedirler. Bu noktada öğretmen adaylarının tamamına yakını sosyal bilgiler dersinin doğrudan çevresel adalet anlayışı ile ilişkili olduğunu düşünmektedir. Katılımcılar sosyal bilgiler dersinin çevre sorunlarını, sosyal problemleri, adalet ve eşitlik gibi konuları içermesi sayesinde bu ilişkinin kurulduğunu düşünmektedirler.

Çevresel adalet eğitiminin pek çok avantajına karşın öğretmen adayları, alt yaş grupları için bu kavramın soyut kalabilmesini yaşanabilecek en önemli güçlük olarak görmektedirler. Ortaokul düzeyinde yer alan çocukların içinde bulundukları bilişsel gelişim dönemleri göz önünde bulundurulacak olursa Piaget'in yapmış olduğu dönemsel sınıflandırmaya göre 5 ve 6. sınıfta yer alan çocukların çoğunun somut işlemler döneminde yer aldığı görülmektedir. Buna karşın 7 ve 8. sınıfta yer alan çocukların çoğunun ise soyut işlemler dönemine geçiş yaptığı görülmektedir. Öğretmen adaylarının görüşlerinin bu sınıflama ile benzerlik taşıdığı ve çevresel adalet gibi soyut nitelikte kavramların ortaokulun ikinci yarısında verilmesinin daha etkili olacağı söylenebilir. Öğretmen adaylarının çoğu lisans eğitimlerinin adalet, eşitlik ve çoklu bakış gibi kavramları kazandırdığını ancak çevresel adalet ve sosyal adalet gibi kavramlar açısından yetersiz kaldığını ifade etmektedir. Benzer şekilde öğretmen adaylarının çoğunluğu lisans eğitimlerini çevresel adalet ve sosyal adalete ilişkin teorik bilgi kazandırma konusunda yetersiz bulmaktadırlar. Sosyal bilgiler dersinin çevresel adalet ile doğrudan ilişkili olduğunu düşünen öğretmen adayları kendi öğretmenlik deneyimlerinde bu kavrama derslerinde yer vermek istediklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Bunu da sosyal projeler, STK işbirlikleri ve etkinlik temelli çalışmalar ile gerçekleştireceklerini söylemişlerdir.

Öneriler: Çalışmanın sonuçları doğrultusunda bazı öneriler getirmek mümkündür. Bu doğrultuda sosyal bilgiler öğretmenliği lisans programı ve sosyal bilgiler dersi öğretim programına çevresel adalet anlayışına ilişkin vurguların eklenmesi, öğretmen eğitiminde çevresel adaletle ilişkili konularda çalışmalar yapan STK'lar ile ortak etkinliklerin yapılması, öğretmen adaylarının çevresel adalet konusundaki farkındalık düzeylerini belirleyebilecek geniş katılımlı çalışmaların yapılması önerilmektedir.