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The Effect of Social Studies Courses on Digital Self Formation in Turkey

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Abstract
The world, which includes all living things from the first human to the present, is based on the process of change and transformation with all its dimensions. It can be stated that this process of change and transformation affects the lives of many living things on earth, as well as remarkable effects on human life. In particular, the digital world, which is one of the important results of technology-based development, can be said to be effective in shaping human life cognitively, psychomotorically and emotionally. This shaping process takes place in educational institutions with the achievements transferred through various fields of study and disciplines. This study, in which the effect of social studies courses on the formation and development process of the digital self-concept, which is based on the cognitive effects of digitalization, was evaluated in line with the perceptions of teachers in Turkey, was designed according to the phenomenological approach, one of the qualitative research methods. The research data were analyzed with the descriptive analysis technique and thematic codes were created based on the findings. A semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used to collect data. The research data, the answers to the questions in the interview form, were collected through online interviews with social studies teachers due to the Covid-19 epidemic in the world and in Turkey. In the study supported by the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of İnönü University with the Normal Research Project coded SBA-2019-1755, the data obtained were analyzed and the findings were presented in tables and figures. Considering the findings of the study, it can be said that the social studies teachers who make up the study group have different and remarkable perceptions about the effects of social studies lessons on digital self-creation.

Keywords: Digitization, Digital Self, Social Studies, Teacher, Perception

1.Introduction

It can be said that digitalization is one of the most important determinants of human life in the 21st century, in which environments, where interaction and communication take place with technology-based tools and materials, are at the forefront. Although digitalization brings many new dimensions and skills to human life, it can be stated that it overshadows many values and habits. As a living creatures on earth, human beings have been in the process of constant curiosity and questioning in their life adventure. The basis of this questioning

process was the effort to question who the human being is, the purpose and goals of existence. In this process, the questions that a person asks within himself and the answers to these questions have brought the concept of self to the forefront as the expression of the inner process that helps him define himself. It can be said that the self-concept, which comes to the forefront, is effective in creating virtual identities in various forms by enabling different discourses, practices and positions in the identity construction process together with the digitalization process. In the adventure of creating virtual identity, the concept of digital self-came to the fore in the process of questioning and building. It can be said that the digital self, which contributes to the self-knowledge of human beings, contributes to the communication, sharing and interaction rate of the individual in virtual environments. In addition, the digital self-creation and development process has increased the level of using social media platforms for the purpose of self-expression, having fun or socializing. It can be said that this increase has positive and negative reflections that are appreciated by the society in the life process of human beings.

Although many studies have been conducted to evaluate the positive and negative effects of digitalization on human life, it has been observed in the literature review that the effects of digitalization on cognitive, psychomotor and emotional development areas are not adequately addressed. While this observed situation constitutes the reason for the study, it can be said that it is very important in terms of shedding light on the studies to be done on the basis of digitalization from now on.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Self-Concept

It can be said that the continuation of humankind's historical existence until today is due to the sense of curiosity, questioning and research skills it carries. It cannot be said that fulfilling the requirements of these feelings and skills is at the same level in every society or individual in the world. Therefore, there is difference and originality on the basis of the concept of human or individual. This difference and originality may vary depending on the individual's self-perception. Although the self is defined in different ways based on the achievements it contains in many disciplines, it can be said that the main theme of this concept is the image that separates the person or the individual from the others (Morva, 2014; Morva, 2016).

In addition, the self can be defined as the concept that forms the inner integrity of the person and evaluates the qualities that exist in him (Allport, 1950). It has been seen in the literature review that many scientists who have worked in different disciplines in line with various themes have made original definitions of the self-concept. That is, while Mead (1972) considers the self as a social formation existing in social relations (Okcebe, 2019), it can be said that Rosenberg (1965) expresses it as the sum of all feelings and thoughts that a person has about himself (Gray-Little, Williams & Hancock, 1997). However, according to William James, the pioneer of scientific research on self-concept, it can be stated that the self is defined as everything that an individual can say that he or she belongs to (Yılmaz Aslan, 2016).

2.2. Digital Self

It can be said that the developments in communication technologies and the change of the media over the phenomenon of digitalization bring about the emergence of original concepts such as the digital (virtual) self. Along with the introduction of Web 2.0 technology into human life, depending on the developing internet technology, it has brought many transformations such as socialization styles. With this technology, new forms of socialization have emerged through social networks. Self-presentation, which was only in the physical world, has moved to the internet world. In this way, it has become possible to talk about both the physical self and the digital self. The increase in the time spent on the internet due to the rapid spread of internet technology has accelerated the technology-based self-development processes in the internet environment (Armağan, 2013).

The digital self can be expressed as an online mental interaction process that designs/creates itself under the influence of electronic audiences or viewers. In addition to many original studies on the concept of digital self,

Zhao can be said to explain the digital self with four main items in his research (Morva, 2016; Okcebe, 2019). These items are given in Figure 1 below.
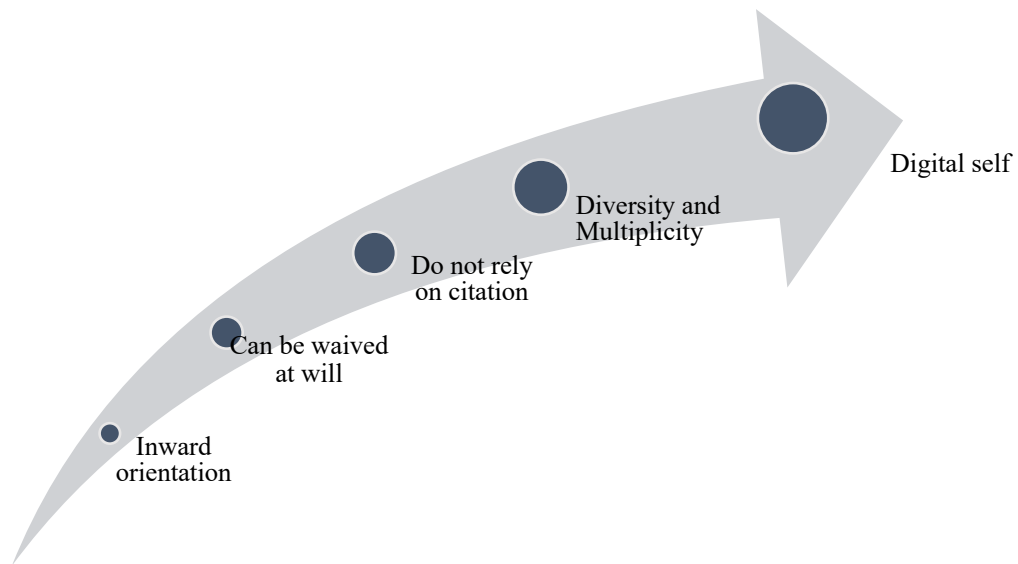

Figure 1: Stages that make up the digital self

What constitutes the digital self is detailed below in detail. These stages are;

2.2.1. Inward Orientation

At this stage, the freedom of expression that the digital self provides to the individual in the virtual environment is highlighted. Namely, it can be said that individuals who are introverted in the online environment can communicate more easily with those who are in the same environment with themselves through the digital self. It can be stated that this communication process stems from the individual's ability to share feelings and thoughts easily without any pressure (Morva, 2016; Okcebe, 2019).

2.2.2. Relying on Narrative

It can be considered as the stage in which the individual expresses and explains who he is. In the offline life process, the individual does not have to introduce or explain himself to his environment. Because the environment can have a perception about the individual by looking at the words and actions of the individual. However, it can be said that it is necessary for the individual to make a transfer about himself on anonymous platforms open to everyone. In environments where written text based communication takes place, the individual can build his digital self by giving information about himself (Morva, 2016; Okcebe, 2019).

2.2.3. Quit When Wanted

The self that an individual creates or uses in the offline environment is related to his/her own gestures and mimics and cannot be considered apart from them. Changes in the individual's knowledge-based thoughts and ideas may make it difficult for the individual to adapt to his environment and may take a certain time. However, it can be said that this situation is different in online environments. The digital self, which is formed depending on the digital environment, which is independent of the physical environment, can be deleted or edited without requiring any changes in the process. However, this process may have some negative consequences such as gaining followers or losing viewers (Morva, 2016; Okcebe, 2019).

2.2.4. Being Multiple and Diverse

In line with this stage, it can be said that Zhao stated in his study that the excess of self in digital platforms should be considered as a mirror of society that contains differences. While similar personality structures are observed in traditional societies, it is seen that there are many different personality structures in modern societies. Modern society teaches individuals that a person can contain many selves within himself. Zhao defines the self-shaped in this way as "decentralized, diffused and diversified and multiplied in a continuous instability" (Morva, 2016; Okcebe, 2019).

Purpose of the Research

In the research, it was aimed to evaluate the formation process of the digital self, which emerged due to the fact that the developing internet and communication technology in the world has an important place in the life of the individual, in the social studies course criterion. For this purpose, the views of social studies teachers working in various secondary schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Turkey were used. In line with the purpose of the study, answers to the following questions were sought.

- What are the concepts that create associations for you when you say digital self?
- Do you think that social studies lessons contribute to the formation of digital self, why?
- What are the skills that come to the fore in social studies in terms of contributing to the formation of digital self?
- What do you think are the factors that negatively affect the digital self-creation process in social studies lessons?
- What are your suggestions for digital self-formation in social studies lessons?

3. Method

A flow chart showing the main stages of the method followed in the study is presented in figure 2. Looking at Figure '2, it can be said that the study took place with online activities due to Covid-19, which continues to affect the world.
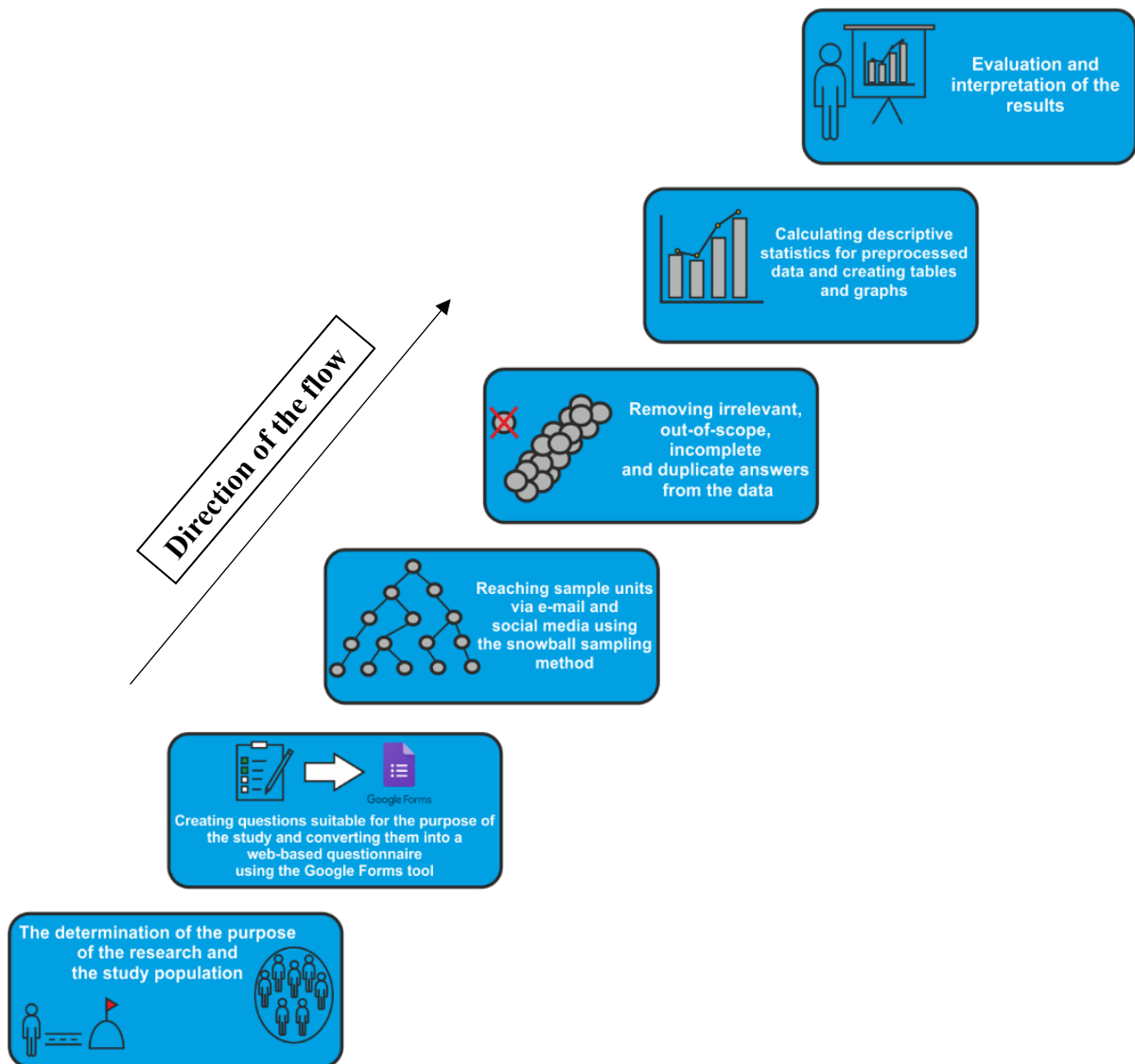
Figure 2: Methodological stages of the study

3.1. Model of the Research

This study is a research designed according to the phenomenological model, one of the qualitative research methods. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005) define qualitative research as a type of research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal perceptions and events in a natural environment in a realistic and holistic manner. The phenomenological model, on the other hand, is the study that aims to investigate the phenomena that are not completely foreign to us and at the same time we do not understand the full meaning (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). The purpose of the phenomenological pattern is to produce knowledge and reveal the reality of the phenomenon (Patton, 1980; Creswell & Poth, 2016).

3.2. Working Group

The study group of the research consists of 50 social studies teachers working in secondary schools in various provincial centers (Malatya, Mardin, Ankara, Bursa, Aydın, Antalya, Sinop) in Turkey in the 2020-2021 academic year. In Figure 3, the gender distribution of the school teachers participating in the research is given. The members of the study group, who contributed to the research with their opinions, were selected within the

scope of simple random sampling, one of the random sampling methods. In the simple random sampling method, all units in the universe have an equal and independent chance to be selected for the sample. However, random sampling methods are stronger than other sampling methods in providing representation and the power of the sample to represent the universe is higher (Özen & Gül, 2007).
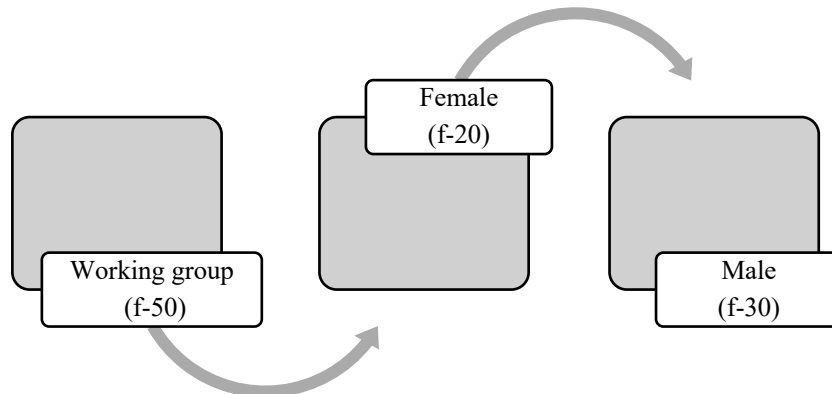

Figure 3: Gender distribution of the study group members

When we look at Figure 3, it is seen that the majority of social studies teachers who contributed to the study with their views are male. The excess of male teachers is not considered as a result especially desired by the researcher, but can be expressed as a random situation that occurs depending on the distribution of the obtained data.

3.3. Data Collection Tool

The data of this research were collected through a semi-structured interview form. In the semi-structured interview technique, the researcher prepares the questions he wants to ask the subject in advance. These prepared questions are asked to each participant within the framework of a certain system. It is ensured that the participants, who are asked the same questions in the interviews, can go into detail in order to ensure that they do not give the same answers (Altunışık, Çoşkun, Yıldırım & Bayraktaroğlu, 2001). For the interview form used in this study, the relevant literature was searched, a semi-structured draft interview form was prepared, and first of all, the administrators were interviewed and the corrections were made on the questions. Then, the semi-structured interview form was examined by the field experts and the form was finalized and applied.

3.4. Analysis of Data

Within the framework of the study, the data recorded by the researcher in the online interviews with the social studies teachers who constituted the study group were interpreted by describing them. The "content analysis" process was followed in the analyses. The data were divided into categories according to their salient features, and cause-effect relationships were tried to be examined and summary information that the reader could easily see was tried to be reached. Tables were created by using the frequency values of the data subjected to content analysis. The tables prepared were interpreted by the researcher. Direct quotations from the answers of the pre-service teachers were included in order to describe the data presented by organizing according to concepts and themes in detail (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Similar opinions were brought together under a common theme and grouped as G.1, G.2…. In the example sentences, the person who thought of the thought was added to the end of the sentence by shortening it. (For example, it is coded at the end of the statements as Participant 1=K1).

4. Findings

The findings obtained in this study, which was prepared to determine the effect of social studies courses on digital self-creation, are discussed under six headings.

4.1.The Situation Regarding the Concepts That the Digital Self Concept Arouses Associative

In order to obtain the data in line with the study, in the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher, "What are the concepts that evoke in you when you say digital self?" The answers given by the social studies teachers constituting the study group to the first question in the form of, were analyzed with the content analysis technique and the findings were given in table 1.

Table 1: Concepts associated with the digital self in the study group members

Themes	f
G.1. Technology based thinking	20
G.2. Virtual warehouse	10
G.3. Virtual thinking	6
G.4. Digital view	10
G.5. Dependent and limited thinking	4
Total	50

Looking at Table 1, it can be said that the social studies teachers who make up the study group have strikingly different mental associations regarding the concept of digital self. The emergence of this situation can be shown as the reason for the continuous technological developments related to the development and formation process of the digital self-concept. The exemplified views of the members of the study group regarding the findings given in Table 1 are given below.

> *"I can say that the concept of digital self is one of the concepts that I have encountered widely in recent years due to technology-based developments. In this direction, I can write many concepts that this type of self-evokes. However, I can say that the first thing that comes to my mind is the virtual warehouse." (Participant, 42)*

> *"In today's world where technology-based activities are at the center of our lives, we have started to meet many of our needs with internet-based applications. I can say that the concepts of digital self, technology-based thinking and perception formed in this process are associated with me." (Participant, 12)*

4.2. Contribution of Social Studies Courses to Digital Self Formation

"Do you think that social studies courses contribute to digital self-formation, why?" The answers given by the members of the study group to the question in the semi-structured interview form in the form of a semi-structured interview were analyzed with the content analysis technique and the findings are given in the form of themes in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Perceptions of study group members regarding digital self-development of social studies

	Themes	f
Yes	G.1. Technology based gains	9
	G.2. Virtual events	15
	G.3. Digital materials	15
No	G.4. Theoretical content	5
	G.5. Inappropriate learning environment	6
Total		50

When the findings given in Table 2, obtained as a result of the analysis of the views of the study group members with the content analysis technique, are examined, it is seen that the social studies teachers have different perceptions about the digital self-development of the social studies lessons. It is observed that this difference is evaluated around five themes. It can be said that the fact that the social studies teachers who constitute the study group have different perceptions about the research finding is due to their different competencies in using technology effectively. The exemplary opinions that best summarize this situation are given below.

"As a teacher who has been in the social studies course for nearly 20 years, I can say the following regarding your question. I am trying to give more space to internet technology-based activities in social studies lessons, especially after smart boards are installed in classrooms. I can say that these activities provide students with more meaningful and concrete learning. I can say that these activities contribute to the formation of digital self in students." (Participant, 7)

"I think that it will not contribute to the formation of digital self, due to the structure of the social studies course and the learning areas it contains are more at the level of knowledge and concept." (Participant, 17)

4.3. Situation Regarding Skills Contributing to Digital Self Formation in Social Studies

"What are the skills that stand out in social studies in terms of contribution to the formation and development of the digital self?" The answers given were analyzed and the findings were given in Table 3 in the form of themes.

Table 3: Perceptions of the study group regarding the skills that contribute to the formation of digital self

Themes	f
G.1. Research	8
G.2. Entrepreneurship	7
G.3. Digital literacy	23
G.4. Media literacy	6
G.5. Innovative thinking	6
Total	50

When we look at the table 3 above regarding the research finding, it is seen that the members of the study group have remarkable perceptions about the subject. In the research finding examining the contribution level of the skills in the social studies curriculum to the formation of the digital self, it is observed that the skills that come to the fore are those included in the social studies curriculum in 2018. This can be shown as one of the proofs that the social studies program has been updated in line with technology-based needs. The exemplified views of the members of the study group regarding the relevant finding are given below.

"I can say that there are many skills that contribute to the formation of digital self in the social studies curriculum. However, I can say that the entrepreneurial skill that contributes to the process of benefiting from digitalization is more prominent." (Participant, 3)

"If the digital self is not supported by communication technologies, many difficulties may be encountered in its formation. Therefore, in answer to your question, I will give the skill that includes the competences on the basis of media literacy." (Participant, 29)

4.4. Situation Regarding Factors Negatively Affecting Digital Self Formation

"What do you think are the factors that negatively affect the digital self-creation process in social studies courses?" The answers given by the members of the study group to the question in the form of content analysis were subjected to content analysis and the findings were given in the form of themes in table 4. When Table 4 is examined, it can be said that the social studies teachers who make up the study group have remarkable perceptions about the subject. The differences in these perceptions can be shown as evidence that the members of the study group think differently about the factors that negatively affect the digital self-formation of the social studies course.

Table 4: Perceptions of the study group about the factors that negatively affect digital self formation

Themes	f
G.1. Program deficiencies	8
G.2. Lack of gain	5
G.3. Learning environment issues	25

G.4. Course material problems	8
G.5. Teacher competency problems	4
Total	50

Considering the findings in Table 4 above, it can be said that the social studies teachers who constitute the study group classified the factors that negatively affect the formation of digital self in social studies under 5 themes, and among these themes, the frequency ratio of learning environment problems was noted. The prominence of this theme can be shown as evidence of the inadequacy of technology-based laboratories in schools for social studies courses. Exemplary opinions regarding the relevant finding are given below.

> *"In my opinion, the most important factor negatively affecting the formation of digital self in the social studies course learning-teaching process is the inadequacy of digital technology in the learning environment. Digital self-formation cannot occur in a classroom where this inadequacy exists."*
> *(Participant, 50)*
> *"I think the main condition for contributing to the formation of digital self in social studies is the proficiency level of the teacher who transfers the course. Digital self-formation cannot take place in a course or environment where there is a lecturer who does not have sufficient equipment in this regard."*
> *(Participant, 9)*

5. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

It can be said that in this study, in which teachers' perceptions of the effect of social studies lessons on digital self-creation were evaluated, original and remarkable results were obtained. It is seen that these results are evaluated under the themes of the connotation of the digital self-concept, the contribution of the social studies course to the formation of the digital self, the skills that stand out in terms of contribution to the formation of the digital self in social studies, the factors that negatively affect the formation of the digital self, and the suggestions for the formation of the digital self (Table, 1, 2,3,4 and 5). It is observed that the findings related to these themes are given together with the frequency ratio distribution in the worksheets. When each of the tables is examined, it can be said that remarkable findings have been reached. One of the results obtained in the study is that the social studies teachers who make up the study group express the digital self with technology-based thinking. It can be said that this result is very important in expressing the level of influence of technology-based mental activities on digital self-formation. It can be said that this result obtained in the study is similar to many results obtained in the study by Patchin and Hinduja (2017). In addition, in this study, it can be said that the development of digital self-formation among young people, associating it with young people's awareness of technology-based activities, and in this study, the technological inadequacies of teachers, which negatively affect the process, are determinative in determining the effect of digital self-formation on the process of digital self-formation.

In the research on the digital self-formation process, it can be said that remarkable results have been achieved regarding the research theme in which the contribution to the social studies course is evaluated. Among these results, it can be said that the findings related to the increase in the number of virtual activities and materials used in the learning-teaching process contribute to the increase of awareness about the research. It can be said that this result obtained in the study is similar to the results obtained in the study by Nokelainen (2006). This similarity can be evaluated as the positive reflection of digital materials on the formation of digital self by making mental learning meaningful in the learning-teaching process. Another important result that supports this positive reflection and obtained in the study is the findings that include the skills that come to the fore in terms of contributing to the formation of digital self in social studies lessons. Looking at Table 3, which includes these findings, it can be said that digital and media literacy, entrepreneurship and research skills come to the fore. Considering these results, it can be stated that the formation of digital self takes the skills gained due to the activeness of the individual in the learning environment in the learning-teaching process. It can be said that this result obtained in the study is similar to the skills highlighted by the technology-based learning process in the study by Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson (1999). It can be said that this similarity is remarkable in terms of the skills

gained by the technology-based activities, which the individual is responsible for his own learning in the learning-teaching process, and that he uses to make his learning meaningful and concrete. Based on these results obtained in the study;

- Digital self-formation should be supported by increasing the number of technology-based activities in the social studies course learning-teaching process,
- The number of acquisitions and activities that contribute to the formation of digital self should be increased in the curriculum,
- The scope of the digital self and its benefits to the individual should be conveyed by experts to the administrators and teachers who manage the process,
- Suggestions can be made that the number of activities and applications that contribute to the formation of the digital self should be increased in the learning environment and course materials.

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