



issues such as human rights, democracy, and cultural values (Zarrillo, 2016, p. 4).

In today's world, not only accessing information but also interpreting, using, and relating that information to daily life has become highly important. Therefore, instructional approaches based solely on the transmission of knowledge are no longer considered sufficient in educational settings; instead, methods that ensure students' active participation, support meaningful and lasting learning, and make the learning process more meaningful are required. Particularly in courses such as Social Studies, where abstract concepts are frequently encountered, there is a need for instructional approaches that attract students' attention and increase their motivation to learn (Mindivanlı Akdoğan & Bilgili, 2016, p. 183; Er & Karadeniz, 2021, p. 30). In this regard, the educational game technique—one of the methods that promotes students' active participation in lessons and enhances their motivation—consists of activities that are planned for instructional purposes, possess educational value, are based on voluntary participation, and follow specific rules (Tural, 2005, p. 90). For educational games to be effective, they should be planned in a way that aligns with the learning outcomes of the lesson, is both entertaining and instructive, appeals to students' developmental levels, and supports active participation (Akcanca & Sömen, 2018, p. 55).

Educational games that are effectively designed and implemented increase the retention of the knowledge students acquire, contribute to the internalization of information, and improve their ability to transfer what they learn to daily life (Gömleksiz, 2005, p. 194). Moreover, educational games are an important instructional tool that supports children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development while making the learning process enjoyable and lasting. These games are not limited to providing knowledge; they also contribute to students' development of positive behaviors, provide emotional satisfaction, and strengthen their social skills (Akandere, 2006, p. 2). In this respect, educational games are considered an alternative or complementary approach to traditional teaching methods.

Although the positive effects of educational games on learning have been emphasized in the literature, it is not always clear to what extent this method is effectively implemented in classroom settings or how it is perceived by students. Particularly in courses such as Social Studies, which aim to develop social awareness and active citizenship skills, more evidence is needed regarding the functionality and effectiveness of educational games in the teaching process. Therefore, it is important to examine this instructional method in greater detail from students' perspectives.

The aim of this study is to reveal students' experiences, perceptions, and opinions regarding Social Studies lessons conducted using the educational game technique. In this context, educational games were utilized during the teaching process of topics within the learning domain of "Production, Distribution, and Consumption" at the 5th, 6th, and 7th grade levels of middle school. During the research process, following the classroom implementations carried out with educational games designed by the researcher, students' thoughts about this process were collected through a semi-structured interview form and analyzed using content analysis.

The main research problem of this study is formulated as: "What are middle school students' emotions, thoughts, comparisons, and evaluations regarding the process of teaching lessons through the educational game technique?" In order to reveal students' views on the use of educational games within the learning domain of "Production, Distribution, and Consumption," which constitutes the focus of the study, students' feelings toward this technique, the perceived differences between the educational game technique and the traditional teaching approach, and the effects of educational games on students' learning processes were examined.

The educational games used in this study are limited to activities developed by the researcher and structured in accordance with the learning outcomes of the course. In the study, it was assumed that the participants responded to the interview questions sincerely and honestly. The research was conducted during the 2023-2024 academic year with 5th, 6th,

and 7th grade students studying at a middle school located in the central district of Kars, Türkiye, within the scope of the “Production, Distribution, and Consumption” learning domain of the Social Studies course. In this respect, the study holds original value as it focuses on the implementation of educational games within this particular learning domain, examines student views in depth through a qualitative method, and provides concrete data regarding game-based learning practices. The findings obtained from the study are expected to guide practices aimed at using educational games more effectively and systematically in lessons and to contribute to the existing literature.

## METHOD

### Research Design

In this study, a qualitative research method was preferred. Qualitative research is defined as a research process that aims to reveal individuals' perceptions and experiences in their natural settings in a holistic and realistic manner, using data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and document analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 39).

The study was conducted based on the basic qualitative research design, one of the qualitative research methods. In basic qualitative studies, the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences are explored and examined in depth in line with the research questions. Such studies aim to reveal individuals' perspectives, interpretations, and meaning-making processes regarding certain phenomena. Unlike specific qualitative research designs such as ethnography, narrative analysis, phenomenology, grounded theory, or critical approaches, the basic qualitative research design focuses on interpreting how individuals make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2023, pp. 22-24).

In this study, the Social Studies course conducted using the educational game technique was examined from different perspectives; the data obtained were analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated. In this way, it was aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of the effects of educational games on the instructional process and the impressions they create among students.

### Study Group (Population–Sample)

In this study, purposive sampling was used to determine the study group. Within this scope, the study group was formed using the convenience sampling technique, which allows the selection of individuals who are most suitable for the purpose of the research, easily accessible, and able to support the data collection process. Convenience sampling is based on the researcher's preference for individuals and groups that are easy to reach and from whom data can be readily collected (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2014, p. 142). The demographic information of the study group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Information on the study group

Gender	Grade Level		
	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade
Female	5	4	4
Male	1	2	2

The study group of the research consists of 5th, 6th, and 7th grade students studying at a middle school located in the central district of Kars, Türkiye, during the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. A total of 18 students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and regularly attended the interviews were included in the study group. Six students were selected from each grade level in order to ensure a balanced distribution among the grade levels. The necessary ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences at Kafkas University with the decision dated March 14, 2024, and numbered 56.

### Data Collection Tools

In this study, the data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. A semi-structured interview form is a data collection tool that aims to reveal not only the responses given by the interviewees but also their emotions, thoughts, and experiences in detail (Büyüköztürk, 2010, p. 163; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 120). The interview form was developed by the researcher in line with the research questions.

During the preparation process of the interview form, seven open-ended questions were initially

created to reveal students' experiences and perceptions regarding the educational game process. The prepared questions were reviewed in terms of language and expression based on the opinions of a Turkish language teacher. Subsequently, the opinions of two Social Studies teachers and two academicians specialized in Social Studies Education were obtained in order to ensure content validity. In line with the feedback received, some questions were combined, some were removed, and the number of questions in the form was reduced to five. The prepared interview form was subjected to a pilot application with five students in order to test the clarity and functionality of the data collection tool. As a result of the pilot application, it was determined that the form was understandable and served the purpose of the study, and after the necessary revisions were made, it was decided to use it in the data collection process.

### Data Collection

The implementation process of the research was carried out during the spring semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. In line with the purpose of the study, educational games planned by the researcher were utilized during the teaching process of each learning outcome in the 5th, 6th, and 7th grade Social Studies lessons within the learning domain of "Production, Distribution, and Consumption." After the completion of the implementation process, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students, and the data were collected through interview forms.

Each interview lasted approximately 10-15 minutes and was conducted face-to-face in the school environment, specifically in the school principal's office. During the interviews, care was taken to create an appropriate environment so that the participants could express themselves comfortably.

### Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the content analysis method. Content analysis is a method frequently used in qualitative research and aims to systematically reveal the main themes found in qualitative data such as texts, interviews, and observations. This analysis method contributes

to making the findings more understandable and meaningful by organizing the data under specific categories. The main reason why content analysis is widely preferred in the social sciences is that it allows complex data to be organized and interpreted (Büyükoztürk, 2010, pp. 269-273).

In order to increase the validity of the data obtained in the study, the data were analyzed independently not only by the researcher but also by an academician specializing in the field of Social Studies, and the findings obtained were compared. During this process, the analyst triangulation method was used (Patton, 2018, p. 556). In addition, direct quotations from students' opinions representing the codes and themes were included to support the data in the findings section.

## FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained as a result of the data collection process and the interpretations made based on these findings are presented. The responses given by the middle school students participating in the study to the question "How did you feel when the lesson was taught through educational games? Could you talk about your feelings?" were analyzed, codes were generated, and the findings obtained are presented in Table 2.

According to Table 2, it was observed that the majority of students stated that they felt happy during the Social Studies lessons conducted with educational games, had fun throughout the process, and that this technique facilitated their learning. Examples of students' opinions are presented below:

S5: *"I felt happy and excited."*

S6: *"I felt entertained, and I was very happy while playing."*

S7: *"I felt more active and happy."*

S9: *"I felt good things; I feel happy when we play educational games. I socialize with my friends."*

The findings obtained in the study reveal that Social Studies lessons conducted using the educational game technique generally created positive emotions among students. The majority of the students stated that they felt happy during these lessons and found

**Table 2. Effects of using the educational game technique on students in the teaching of the production, distribution, and consumption learning domain**

Code	f	Student(s)
Feeling happy	11	S5, S6, S7, S9, S10, S11, S13, S15, S16, S17, S18
Having fun	9	S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, S11, S12, S14, S15
Facilitating learning	4	S10, S14, S15, S17
Feeling good	2	S8, S9
Feeling excited	2	S5, S17
Socializing	1	S9
Being active	1	S7
Showing interest in the lesson	1	S12
Retention of learning	1	S14

the process enjoyable. This situation indicates that educational games have a strong affective impact on students.

When the codes are examined, “feeling happy” and “having fun” emerge as the most frequently repeated emotional states. In addition, some students stated that educational games facilitated learning, increased their interest in the lesson, contributed to their socialization, and made them feel more active. These findings indicate that educational games support not only individual learning but also interaction among students and social participation.

Overall, students’ statements reveal that lessons conducted through educational games provide higher motivation, encourage students to participate in the lesson with positive emotions, and thus make the instructional process more efficient. In this context, the educational game technique can be considered an effective instructional approach that increases students’ emotional engagement and helps them develop positive attitudes toward learning.

The responses given by middle school students to the question “Were there any differences between the lesson conducted with educational games and other Social Studies lessons? If so, what were they?” are presented in detail in Table 3.

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the majority of students stated that they felt better in the lessons taught using the educational game technique within the “Production, Distribution, and Consumption” learning domain, that the information they learned was more permanent, and that this technique facilitated their learning. Examples of students’ opinions are presented below:

S2: *“There were differences; the lesson taught from the textbook and notebook was more boring.”*

S3: *“Educational games are fun and instructive. I understood the topics I could not understand in the Social Studies lesson through educational games.”*

**Table 3. Differences Between Teaching Through Educational Games and Other Instructional Processes**

Code	f	Student(s)
More enjoyable	9	S3, S5, S6, S10, S12, S13, S16, S17, S18
Easier learning	5	S3, S5, S10, S13, S16,
Better	2	S1, S16,
Greater retention of learning	2	S4, S14
Use of a different technique	2	S1, S7
Increasing interest in the lesson	1	S15
Providing repetition	1	S14
Less boring	1	S2

S14: *“While playing educational games, I realized that what I learned would remain more permanently in my mind; it also caused us to review the lesson.”*

S15: *“Educational games bring us much closer to the lesson.”*

These findings reveal that middle school students perceive the lessons in the “Production, Distribution, and Consumption” learning domain taught through the educational game technique as clearly different from Social Studies lessons conducted through traditional methods. Students described these lessons as more enjoyable, understandable, memorable, engaging, and less boring. These findings clearly demonstrate the affective and cognitive effects of educational games on students.

In particular, the high frequency of the codes “more enjoyable” and “easier learning” indicates that students adopted the educational game technique as a method that promotes active participation and supports learning. In addition, expressions such as “retention of learning” and “repetition” show that this technique not only attracts immediate interest but also reinforces learning.

Overall, students’ opinions reveal that educational games positively affect not only the way the lesson is conducted but also students’ attitudes toward the lesson and their participation in the learning process. These findings suggest that educational games can serve as a strong alternative or complementary tool to traditional teaching methods.

The responses given by middle school students to the question “How did the educational games you played during the lesson affect your learning of the topic?” are presented in detail in Table 4.

The data presented in Table 4 reveal that Social Studies lessons conducted using the educational game technique make a significantly positive contribution to students’ learning processes. The most prominent effects were identified as instructional value, creating an enjoyable learning environment, and ensuring the retention of learning. However, individual effects (such as reinforcement and contribution to exams) were emphasized less frequently. This suggests that educational games are more effective particularly when they are designed to support the overall learning process. Examples of students’ opinions are presented below:

S1: *“It had an effect because we learned about trade, industry, economy, and health.”*

S5: *“I understood the topics better, and they remained in my mind.”*

S7: *“Since it is done in a fun way, it stays in mind more.”*

S9: *“It helps me reinforce the topic and helps me learn it better.”*

Overall, students’ opinions indicate that the educational game technique provides multifaceted contributions to the learning process. Through games, learning becomes more meaningful, lasting, and participatory, while the instructional process also becomes a more effective and efficient experience for students.

## CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section of the study, the qualitative data obtained from students regarding their perceptions and experiences with educational games, as well as the effects of the educational game technique on the

**Table 4: Effects of Using the Educational Game Technique in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption Learning Domain on Students’ Learning Processes**

Code	f	Student(s)
Being instructive	12	S1, S3, S5, S6, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S16, S17
Enjoyable learning environment	5	S2, S7, S10, S11, S16
Retention of learning	5	S5, S7, S14, S15, S18
Reinforcement	2	S8, S9
Increasing participation	2	S14, S15
Contribution to exams	1	S4

learning process, are evaluated together with existing theoretical approaches and findings in the literature.

In this study, the effects of teaching lessons through educational games on students were identified as feeling happy, having fun, facilitating learning, feeling good, feeling excited, socializing, being active, showing interest in the lesson, and ensuring the retention of learning. Educational games are games that provide students with the opportunity to review what they have learned in an enjoyable learning environment and that serve educational purposes through outcome-based activities (Bilen, 2002, p. 197; Tural, 2005, pp. 86-87; Çangır, 2008, pp. 11-12). The sense of happiness inherent in play—which is defined as a source of joy and pleasure that stimulates both the senses and emotions and supports children's physical and psychological development (Akandere, 2006, p. 2)—has also manifested itself in educational games. Numerous studies have also demonstrated the many positive effects that educational games create on students.

Yurt (2007, p. 161), in an experimental study conducted to determine the effect of educational game activities on student achievement, concluded that the students in the experimental group felt happy and were satisfied with the lesson. In a master's thesis examining the effect of educational games on concept teaching in the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge course, Atasoy (2019, p. 93) also concluded that educational games made students happy. Similarly, Diken and Özdemir (2025, pp. 863-864) found that in science lessons taught through educational games, students felt happy, joyful, entertained, and successful.

Students' statements that they felt happy during lessons conducted with educational games highlight the importance of the emotional dimension of the learning process. When students feel happy and an enjoyable learning environment is created, their interest in and participation in the lesson are also positively affected. Encouraging the emergence of positive emotions during the learning process can increase students' motivation to learn and help ensure that knowledge is learned more permanently (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 109). In a study aiming to reveal the views of teachers and middle school students on the

use of educational games in Social Studies teaching, Bilal (2022, p. 49) concluded that lessons conducted through educational games were found to be more enjoyable by both teachers and students.

Students' statements indicating that educational games facilitate learning demonstrate that this method affects not only affective processes but also cognitive processes. Educational games are activities that are not merely for entertainment; rather, they help students understand complex concepts more easily by making them more concrete and thereby facilitate learning (Gee, 2003, p. 69; Kaçar, 2023, p. 128). Studies have also shown that instruction conducted through educational games facilitates learning (Bayat et al., 2014, p. 204; Bilal, 2022, p. 53; Demirezen & Öner Armağan, 2024, p. 13) and increases the retention of what has been learned (Donmuş, 2012, p. 91; Kırbaş & Koparan Girgin, 2018, p. 521; Koka, 2018, p. 52; Bayram & Çalışkan, 2019, p. 30; Ak & Oruç, 2022, p. 22).

One of the effects of teaching lessons through educational games on the learning environment is its influence on students' in-class behaviors. Increasing students' interest in the lesson, enhancing their participation, and supporting their socialization can be considered among these effects. When students' interest and motivation toward the lesson are high, their participation in the lesson is positively affected. As a natural consequence of this situation, classroom interaction increases and students' socialization is supported. Studies conducted both in Social Studies and in other subjects have concluded that instruction carried out through educational games contributes positively to students' motivation. In the Social Studies course, Erkin (2019, p. 89) found that educational games, and Ak and Oruç (2022, p. 22) found that game-based activities increase students' motivation. Similarly, Ural (2009) reported that educational digital games increase students' motivation in science teaching, while Donmuş (2012, p. 93) concluded that educational computer games increase students' motivation in English lessons. When evaluated from students' perspectives, instruction conducted through educational games appears to make significant contributions to the process in affective, cognitive, and social dimensions.

In this study, it was revealed that, according to students, there are differences between lessons conducted with educational games and other Social Studies lessons. Among these differences, students indicated that Social Studies lessons taught through educational games are more enjoyable, facilitate easier learning, make the lesson more pleasant, ensure the retention of learning, involve the use of different techniques, increase interest in the lesson, provide opportunities for repetition, and help reduce boredom.

Contemporary educational approaches emphasize the active participation of students in the learning process. In order to ensure students' active participation, it is necessary to include activities during the instructional process that maintain their motivation and address their individual interests and needs. The results obtained from this study support the idea that lessons conducted with educational games provide various benefits for students. In a thesis study aiming to determine teachers' and students' views on the use of educational games in Social Studies teaching, Bilal (2022, p. 53) reported that Social Studies teachers believe that teaching through educational games makes lessons more reinforcing and enjoyable. In the same study, it was also stated that students described educational games as entertaining, facilitating learning, beneficial, knowledge-enhancing, and reinforcing activities. This result helps explain why the students in the present study perceived instruction conducted through educational games as different.

Similar results can also be observed in studies aiming to determine teachers' views on the use of the educational game technique in the teaching-learning process. Sömen and Metin Göksu (2020, p. 164) reported that Social Studies teachers; Demirtaş et al. (2021, p. 16) stated that classroom and subject teachers; and Özyürek and Çavuş (2016, p. 2157) as well as Kırbaş and Koparan Girgin (2018, pp. 521-522) found that primary school teachers expressed that educational games increase student participation, ensure the retention of learning, and make lessons more enjoyable.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Gençer and Karamustafaoğlu (2014, p. 72) aiming to determine students' views on teaching the Science and Technology course through educational games, it was concluded

that all students actively participated in the educational games and that students who were previously uninterested in the lesson showed increased interest as a result of the observations made. Among the effects of educational games on the instructional process are helping achieve the learning outcomes of the lesson, reinforcing and revising previously learned knowledge, correcting misconceptions, maintaining students' interest in the lesson, and making learning easier and more enjoyable (Çangır, 2008, p. 12; Bayat et al., 2014, p. 205; Noemi & Máximo, 2014, pp. 230-231). From this perspective, it can be considered that teaching the Social Studies course by utilizing educational games serves its intended purpose.

In this study, it was determined that the educational games played during the lessons had several effects on students' learning of the topic, including instructional value, creating an enjoyable learning environment, ensuring the retention of learning, providing reinforcement, increasing participation, and contributing to exam performance. In the literature, educational games are described as activities that develop knowledge and skills, enable the interpretation and reinforcement of knowledge, support the retention of learning, and contribute to students' academic achievement (Prensky, 2008, p. 1004; Canbay, 2012, pp. 87-89; Bozoğlu, 2013, pp. 87-89; Deater-Deckard et al., 2013, p. 21; Korkusuz & Karamete, 2013, p. 78; Kaya & Elgün, 2015, p. 329).

In this study, students' views that educational games contribute to exam performance can be associated with the ability of game-based instruction to enhance both academic achievement and the retention of learning. Various studies examining the use of educational games in the teaching-learning process have emphasized similar aspects of educational games. Karabacak (1996, p. 41) stated that instruction conducted through educational games in Social Studies lessons increased students' academic achievement. Similarly, according to the study by Koka (2018, pp. 51-53), computer-assisted educational games used in Social Studies lessons increased students' academic achievement and the retention of learning. Erkin (2019, pp. 94-95) also reported that the use of educational games in teaching earthquake-related topics in Social Studies was highly effective and increased students' motivation.

Similar findings have also been obtained in studies conducted in different subject areas regarding the use of educational games. In a study utilizing educational computer games in science teaching, Ural (2009, pp. 170-172) concluded that educational games positively affected both students' academic achievement and their motivation. Altunay (2004, pp. 96-97) found that instruction supported by educational games in mathematics was effective in ensuring the retention of knowledge. Şenol (2007, pp. 47-49) concluded that knowledge taught through games in English lessons remained in students' memory for a long time. Donmuş (2012, pp. 90-92) stated that, in English lessons where educational games were used, games had a positive effect on students' motivation and the retention of learning. Atasoy (2019, pp. 93-94) reported that the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge lesson taught through educational games became more enjoyable, entertaining, and exciting; students felt freer during the lesson, became more motivated, and as a result, their learning became more permanent.

In light of the results obtained from the fourth sub-problem of the research, it can be stated that the benefits of using the educational game technique in Social Studies lessons—such as creating an enjoyable learning environment and ensuring reinforcement and retention—are consistent both with the objectives of utilizing educational games in the instructional process and with the results obtained in other studies.

Based on the results obtained from this study, the following recommendations were developed:

- In this section, recommendations for teachers and researchers are presented based on the findings obtained from the study;
- In order to ensure students' active participation and promote learning through enjoyment during the instructional process, educational game activities should be included as activities in textbooks.
- To ensure easy access to educational games, digital platforms and applications should be developed, and free or low-cost solutions should be offered so that teachers and students can benefit from these platforms.
- Teaching lessons with different instructional techniques in different learning environments

may be engaging for students. For unit-end assessments, out-of-class learning environments (such as sports halls or school yards) can be used to enable students to reinforce what they have learned through the educational game technique.

- In order to obtain the expected benefits from educational games, effective planning should be carried out beforehand. Therefore, when planning educational games, factors such as the general conditions of the learning environment, students' levels, the difficulty level of the game, and its educational contribution should be taken into consideration.
- This study was conducted within the scope of the Social Studies course. The educational game technique can be applied in different subjects, and students' views on this issue can be examined.
- Teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding the educational game technique can also be investigated.

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