

# Reflections of Universal and Local Values in Textbooks According to Documents and Teachers' Views

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**Abstract:** *This is a qualitative research study aimed at examining the presence of values in the texts and images of 3rd grade Life Science textbooks, as well as exploring teachers' views on this subject. The research is based on the 12 universal values outlined in UNESCO's "Living Values Education" Program. It investigates whether these values are reflected in the 3rd grade Life Science textbooks and the findings are supported by teachers' opinions. The study was conducted during the 2023-2024 academic year in state primary schools affiliated with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Document analysis on the 3rd grade Life Science textbooks and interviews with 14 classroom teachers were conducted as research methods. Qualitative data analysis involved document analysis and content analysis techniques. It was found that the content of the 3rd grade Life Science textbooks includes 337 statements related to values among which 131 statements were found in the texts and 206 in the images. According to the results, the values that appeared most frequently in the Life Science textbooks were "respect" and "responsibility," while the least represented values were "tolerance," "humility," and "honesty." The majority of teachers expressed the view during the interviews that universal and cultural values are moderately represented in the 3rd grade Life Science textbooks. Additionally, teachers noted deficiencies in the representation of values in the books and provided suggestions for addressing these shortcomings.*

**Keywords:** *teacher education; universal core values; values education; life science lesson; life science textbook.*

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## Introduction

Education on a global scale is the most influential factor shaping the future of the world in terms of sustainability. Traditional education, which focuses on transmitting pre-produced knowledge, has failed to provide solutions to many global issues. Moreover, it has contributed to the emergence of new problems such as wars, unemployment, environmental pollution, migration, and hunger. Even educational reforms based on past-oriented reactive policies have remained insufficient (Kennedy & Sundberg, 2020). In order to address global challenges in the 21st century, it is necessary to transform education systems into a sustainable structure. In this context, sustainability in education is one of the most important concepts applicable to contemporary educational systems (Graham et al., 2015). In fact, education can serve as an effective tool for sustainable development.

UNESCO (2024) emphasizes that education for sustainable development can empower individuals to make conscious decisions, change society, and take action both individually and collectively to protect the planet. Furthermore, it highlights that education equips people of all ages with the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies needed to address issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, resource overconsumption, and inequalities that affect the well-being of both humanity and the planet (UNESCO, 2024). Through the behaviors instilled in individuals via education, a more livable world can potentially be created.

Graham et al. (2015) argued that sustainable learning becomes evident when students feel confident and competent in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values they acquire, can effectively apply them, and are able to build upon these behaviors throughout their lifelong learning journey (Graham et al., 2015). Sustainable learning, beyond prior knowledge and skills, is an ongoing, purposeful, responsive, and proactive learning process in which students continuously reconstruct their knowledge and skills as circumstances change (Hays & Reinders, 2020).

In the modern era, both social and professional life are advancing at an unprecedented pace. Therefore, integrating sustainability in education has become imperative for the future of both global society and the planet. In this regard, students must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values associated with the concept of sustainability to actively contribute to shaping the future.

The concept of value is one of the skills students must acquire as part of sustainable learning. Values are concepts that are passed down from generation to generation and provide a certain standard in social life.

According to Hofstede (2001), a value refers to the broad tendency to prefer certain situations over others. The acquisition of values begins within the family and continues in primary education. In many countries, values education starts in the preschool period. Dönmez & Uyanık (2022) stated that initiating values education in the preschool period has a critical impact on children's ability to internalize values and reflect them in their lives and behaviors. Since education is a continuous process, the lifelong acquisition and transmission of values is called values education (Yaman, 2012). It is essential that values are incorporated into a rich educational process. The process by which values are transmitted starts in the family and is then supported and reinforced by schools. Placing emphasis on character development in early childhood makes values education significantly more effective (Eskey, 2004). Values are rules that concern all of humanity; therefore, instilling these values from preschool onward is crucial. Some fundamental values are universal and have fixed foundations, where such universal values are generally accepted by all societies. Although values vary in practice from society to society, it is essential that some common values exist for all people (Kalaycı Alas & Korutürk, 2024).

The Living Values Education Program (LVE) offers an educational approach based on universal values and is closely aligned with UNESCO's educational goals. The program aims to integrate universal values such as honesty, respect, peace, love, cooperation, and responsibility into students' daily lives. The aim of such values is to foster a common understanding and harmony among different cultures and societies. With its emphasis on universal values and respect for cultural diversity, Living Values Education contributes to UNESCO's vision of achieving sustainable development goals. In this context, the program aims to create positive change and awareness among educators, students, and societies worldwide. The program includes 12 universal values: peace, respect, love, cooperation, happiness, honesty, humility, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, freedom, and unity (Tillman, 2000).

In the process of teaching values to students, the teacher plays the most important role. In developed countries, for investments in education to yield effective and successful results, the primary focus is on teacher training (Kıncal, 1999). To ensure lifelong learning and a successful professional career, individuals must acquire 21st-century skills (Günüç et al., 2013). For the future, it is essential that teachers receive training and students acquire these skills (Kereluik et al., 2013). Since these skills determine the ability of nations to compete globally, they should be acquired in schools (Yalçın, 2018), and teachers preparing the new generation must be well-equipped in

this regard. The roles and responsibilities of teachers have evolved in this changing world; they are no longer merely transmitters of knowledge but rather facilitators who guide students toward critical and creative thinking, provide resources, and direct them accordingly. Teachers should be capable of understanding their students, communicating effectively, keeping up with and adapting to cultural and technological changes, possessing problem-solving skills, and demonstrating leadership abilities (Aydeniz, 2017). Furthermore, it is of great importance that they are adequately trained in values education. Since teachers' behaviors play a significant role in the development of children's emotional skills related to values (Yenen & Ulucan, 2021), it is essential that values education is incorporated into teacher training during undergraduate education.

Instilling values in children is as important as teaching subjects like mathematics and science. Values education is integrated into schools through specific courses. However, since values vary across societies, research indicates that each country adopts different values (Yenen & Ulucan, 2021; Dönmez & Uyanık, 2022). Life sciences course is one of the important courses in teaching the values of society. The life science course presents various aspects of social life to students through texts and visuals in textbooks, helping them adapt to society. Students in primary school, particularly in grades 1-3, typically encounter values education within the context of life sciences. This course plays a crucial role in transmitting both universal and national values to new generations through education.

For healthy personality development, students need learning environments suited to their needs. In this regard, teachers must understand their students' characteristics and design learning experiences that support their personality development accordingly. This is possible through a student-centered curriculum, which provides an environment tailored to students' interests, needs, and characteristics. Therefore, it is crucial that values education are incorporated into textbooks and texts. Teachers use various materials appropriate to students' levels, with textbooks being the primary resource. According to Karatay (2007), texts that children read should address both individual and societal needs in terms of value transmission and support individuals in living in harmony with themselves and their surroundings. In textbooks, values are presented through texts and visuals.

In this regard, primary school life sciences textbooks (LST) are highly significant educational materials used for instilling values in students (Özkan, 2017). Images, like texts, carry meaning. Visuals in textbooks align with the main structure of the text and enhance the content presented to

students (Kara, 2012). The texts in textbooks should reflect value judgments., and today, selecting values that are appropriate for society is crucial. Additionally, values education should never involve coercion. No student should be forced to adopt a particular value, nor should anyone impose their own values on others. For example, while facilitating the acquisition of values, teachers may present the values they believe in, explain their reasoning, and then allow students to choose their own values (Kneller, 1964; Tozlu, 1997; cited in Dilmaç & Ekşi, 2007).

The significance of this research lies in the fact that it determines the extent to which values are included in life sciences textbooks for sustainable learning and addressing any deficiencies. Additionally, examining teachers' perspectives on the presence of values in life sciences textbooks contributes to understanding the content better. The research findings will also help students encounter a more qualified values education.

This study aims to analyze the values contained in the texts and images in primary school life sciences textbooks, determine their distribution and proportions, and contribute to the development of more functional books in terms of values. Additionally, by collecting opinions from classroom teachers, the study seeks to identify their views, thoughts, and suggestions on the subject. Accordingly, the research problem is formulated as: "What is the presence of values in the texts and images of 3rd-grade primary school Life Sciences textbooks, and what are teachers' perspectives?"

The following sub-problems have been identified:

1. What is the presence of values in the texts and images of 3rd-grade primary school Life Sciences textbooks?
2. What are teachers' perspectives on the concepts of "value" and "values education"?
3. What are teachers' views on the extent to which universal value judgments are included in the texts and images of third-grade Life Sciences textbooks?
4. What are teachers' views on the extent to which values of Turkish Cypriot culture are included in the texts and images of third-grade Life Sciences textbooks?
5. What are teachers' opinions on the deficiencies in the representation of values in the texts and images of third-grade Life Sciences textbooks?
6. What are teachers' perspectives on the relationship between values in the texts and images of third-grade Life Sciences textbooks?

This study is limited to the responses given by 14 3rd grade teachers working in TRNC state primary schools in the 2023-2024 academic year to the interview form used in the research.

### **Literature review**

A literature review is an essential tool for evaluating a topic within a broader framework. Studies in the literature provide the opportunity to understand both the theoretical and practical aspects of value transmission while also detailing the role of texts and visuals in this process. Furthermore, a literature review systematically analyzes the existing body of knowledge, offering opportunities to contribute further to the field and enhance educational materials (Paul & Criado, 2020). In this way, the literature review strengthens the foundations of the study and facilitates a more effective approach to value education. Below are examples from the literature related to the subject under discussion.

Çaycı (2018), in his study titled "Evaluation of the primary school life studies curriculum (Grades 1, 2, and 3) based on teacher candidates' opinions," concluded that, according to teacher candidates, the program lacks the necessary approaches in the process of imparting skills and values, does not provide adequate support to teachers in these areas, and requires the addition of certain skills and values for alignment with its overall objectives.

Hatay-Uçar and Çetinkaya (2021) examined how and the extent to which core values determined by the Ministry of National Education were included in the Life Studies textbooks for grades 1, 2, and 3. The findings revealed that the most frequently included core values in all textbooks were responsibility, friendship, respect, and self-control, while the least frequently included values were honesty, patience, justice, and helpfulness. Core values were most often presented through texts and least frequently through questions. Moreover, the study revealed that core values were primarily incorporated indirectly into textbooks.

ErbaŖ and BaŖkurt (2021) investigated whether the values specified in the life studies curriculum were adequately represented in textbooks. The documents examined included the Life Studies textbooks used in Turkey during the 2018-2019 academic year for grades 1, 2, and 3. The findings indicated that the most frequently encountered were: responsibility, self-control, and social awareness values in the 1st-grade textbooks; responsibility, self-control, and helpfulness in the 2nd-grade textbooks; and responsibility, self-control, and frugality in the 3rd-grade textbooks.

Öztürk and Özkan (2018) aimed to analyze the texts and visuals in 3rd-grade Life Studies textbooks published by a private publishing house during the 2016-2017 academic year with regard to their representation of values. They identified value-related expressions in texts and visuals intended for value education. The study concluded that love was the most frequently included value, while hospitality was the least represented. The researchers emphasized the need for more emphasis on values such as patience, scientific inquiry, love of nature, aesthetics, and hospitality in Life Studies textbooks.

Güzel-Candan & Ergen (2014) examined primary school 3rd-grade Life Studies textbooks (Books 1 and 2) in terms of their inclusion of fundamental universal values. Their findings indicated that the most frequently addressed values in these textbooks were love and responsibility, while the least emphasized values were hospitality and peace.

Gündoğan (2020) aimed to determine the necessity of value education and its functionality within the context of the Life Studies course based on the perspectives of prospective classroom teachers. The results showed that prospective teachers found values education to be essential from individual, social, educational, and universal perspectives. They explained the significance of values education in the Life Studies course through themes such as the course's suitability for value transmission, its benefits for children and society, related challenges, and suggested improvements. The study also found that prospective teachers believed the most important values in Life Studies courses should be love, respect, patriotism, and responsibility. In their lesson plans, they most frequently incorporated responsibility and sensitivity values, and they largely preferred direct transmission methods for teaching values.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design***

In this study, a qualitative research method was employed. Qualitative research focuses on attributes that are difficult to measure, such as words or observations, and is based on the interpretation and analysis of these attributes (Glesne, 2012). According to Creswell (2009, p. 4), qualitative research *"is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem."*

The research design of this study is based on a case study approach. Merriam (2013) defined a case study as an in-depth description and examination of a bounded system. According to Creswell (2009), case

studies "*are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals.*" In this study, the holistic single-case design classified by Yin (1984) was utilized (Yin, 2003). The 3rd-grade life sciences textbooks were examined as a single unit of analysis, and the 14 primary school teachers interviewed were considered as a single case. Creswell (2009) emphasized that in case studies, researchers collect detailed information over an extended period using various data collection methods. In this study, document analysis and interviews were used for data collection purposes. Merriam (2013) classified documents as written, visual, digital, and physical materials, defining them as anything available before the research process begins. In this study, the 3rd-grade life sciences textbook was used as a written document.

In qualitative interviews, researchers conduct face-to-face interviews with participants, communicate via telephone, or organize focus group discussions with six to eight people (Creswell, 2009). In this study, researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants.

### ***Participants of the study***

This study was conducted during the 2023-2024 academic year. In selecting the participants, researchers employed the convenience sampling method, taking into account the availability and accessibility of participants (Creswell, 2009). Within this framework, the participants of the study consisted of 14 primary school teachers working in public primary schools in the TRNC during the 2023-2024 academic year. Special attention was given to selecting teachers who were teaching 3rd grade and who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The personal demographic information of the participating teachers is presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Personal Demographic Information of Participant Teachers

Variable	Group	Number	Percentage
Age	22 – 25	1	7%
	26 – 35	5	36%
	36 – 45	3	21%
	46 – 55	5	36%
	55+	-	-
	Total	14	100
Nationality	TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)	13	93%
	TRNC-Turkiye	1	7%
	Turkiye	-	-
	Total	14	100
Gender	Female	13	93%
	Male	1	7%
	Total	14	100
Education Level	Atatürk Teacher Training Academy	8	57%
	Foundation/Private University in TRNC	4	29%
	University Abroad	2	14%
	Total	14	100
Graduation Level	Bachelor's Degree	13	93%
	Master's Degree	1	7%
	Doctorate	-	-
	Total	14	100
Professional Experience	0-5	1	7%
	5-10	3	21,5%
	10-15	3	21,5%
	15-20	1	7%
	20-25	3	21,5%
	25+	3	21,5%
	Total	14	100

***Data collection tools***

In this research, documents and a semi-structured interview form were used as data collection tools. The data collection tools of the study are presented below.

## **Document**

Materials that provide information on the subject under investigation are referred to as documents. These documents can be official (public), such as newspapers, meeting minutes, and official reports, or private, such as personal diaries, memoirs, letters, and emails (Creswell, 2009). Patton (2014) defined documents as any text-containing material that serves as a data source for qualitative analysis. Morgan (2022) emphasized that document analysis involves the examination of various types of documents, including books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles, and institutional reports. In this study, the 3rd-grade life sciences studies 1 and 2 textbooks were used as documents. The data for the research comprised textual and visual expressions found in these textbooks. To identify these values, a Value Review Form was prepared by the researchers. This form is based on the 12 universal values specified in UNESCO's "Living Values Education Program" and includes subcategories for each value. These core values are cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, love, humility, peace, respect, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, and unity (Tillman, 2000).

## ***Interview form***

To answer the research questions, a semi-structured interview form was prepared by the researchers. In the initial stage of form preparation, a literature review was conducted (Paul & Criado, 2020; Çaycı, 2018; Hatay Uçar & Çetinkaya, 2021; ErbaŖ & BaŖkurt, 2021; Öztürk & Özkan, 2018; Güzel & Ergen, 2014; Gündođan, 2020). The purpose of the literature review was to determine the current state of scientific studies on the subject, identify existing gaps, and establish the contributions of the conducted research to the literature. Based on the results of the literature review and the research questions, a 7-question interview form was developed. Opinions were obtained regarding this interview form from two experts (one Associate Professor in Psychological Counseling and Guidance and one Doctor in the Social and Historical Foundations of Education). Based on this expert feedback, the final interview form included five main interview questions and probing questions. This form was named the "Teacher Interview Form."

## ***Data collection***

Prior to the data collection process, all necessary permissions (TRNC Ministry of National Education, Atatürk Teacher Academy Ethics Committee approvals) were obtained. During the interviews, audio recordings were made with the participants' consent and notes were taken. Participants were informed in advance that the collected data would be used for a research

project, and they were not requested to give their names in the interview form. Each interview lasted an average of 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with each teacher, ensuring confidentiality. The researcher conducted detailed discussions with 14 teachers and recorded the interviews. The recorded audio files were then transcribed into text.

### ***Data analysis***

The collected data from the document analysis and interviews were transferred into digital format and recorded. The analysis methods used in the study were "document analysis" and "content analysis."

### ***Document analysis***

Document analysis is a qualitative research method used to systematically and meticulously examine the content of written documents (Wach, 2013). According to Bowen (2009), document analysis comprises a series of operations that take place in the process of examining and evaluating printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-accessible) information. This process is also classified as the examination of written narratives whose forms contain information about the targeted fact or facts (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Similar to other qualitative research methods, document analysis requires the examination and interpretation of data to derive meaning, develop an understanding of the subject, and generate empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this study, document analysis was conducted using texts and images from the 3rd-grade Life Studies textbooks (Volumes 1 and 2). Value-related expressions within the texts along with visual representations aimed at value education were identified. The frequency of each value's presence in texts and images was determined enabling the most and least frequently mentioned values to be listed in order.

### ***Content analysis***

Content analysis is used to "gather similar data within certain themes and concepts and organize them in a manner understandable to the reader" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The aim of content analysis is to identify concepts and relationships that explain the data obtained from participant opinions, document analysis, and observations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The fundamental process in content analysis involves categorizing similar data under specific themes and concepts and organizing them for interpretation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In content analysis, data obtained through interviews, observations, or documents are analyzed in four stages: (1) coding the data, (2) identifying codes, categories, and themes, (3)

organizing codes, categories, and themes, and (4) describing and interpreting findings (Eysenbach & K hler, 2002; Yıldırım & ŖimŖek, 2013). In this study, content analysis was conducted to organize and interpret the opinions of the teachers who voluntarily participated in the study.

### ***Trustworthiness of the research***

Ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research is essential for demonstrating the transparency of data collection and analysis processes (Creswell, 2009). In this regard, various strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. First, expert opinions were obtained for the interview questions. Second, "participant confirmation" was conducted for interview recordings. Participant confirmation is an approval meeting conducted individually or in groups with participants (Creswell, 2009). The researchers held individual confirmation meetings with each participant. At these meetings, participants were asked to evaluate the findings derived from the data analysis. All participants confirmed that the results accurately reflected their perspectives and viewpoints. Third, multiple data sources were used and triangulation was applied. Both document analysis and interviews were utilized in the study. To ensure transferability, data collection, analysis, and findings were all described in detail.

## **Results**

This section presents the findings obtained from the analysis and interpretation of the texts and images in the 3rd Grade Life Sciences Textbooks (3rd GLST) in terms of their inclusion of universal and local values, as well as the perspectives of teachers on this matter.

### ***Findings related to the first research question***

The first research question of the study was formulated as follows: "To what extent are values included in the texts and images of the 3rd Grade Life Sciences Textbooks?" In this context, the findings obtained from the analysis of 3rd. GLST 1 and 2 are presented under this section.

**Table 2.** Frequencies of Values in Texts and Images/Visuals in 3rd Grade Life Studies Textbooks (3rd.GLST 1 and 2)

Life Sciences Textbooks	Texts	Images/Visuals	Total
3rd.GLST -1	98	127	225
3rd.GLST -2	33	79	112
Total	131	206	337

As illustrated in Table 2, 225 value expressions were found in 3rd GLST-1 and 112 value expressions in 3rd GLST -2, resulting in a total of 337 value expressions across both textbooks. Moreover, of these value expressions, 131 were found in texts, while 206 were identified in images/visuals. Detailed findings concerning the textbooks are provided separately in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Findings on the inclusion of values in texts and images in 3rd grade life science textbooks

VALUES		UNIT I (GLST-1)				UNIT II (GLST-1)				UNIT III (GLST-1)				UNIT IV (GLST-2)				TOTAL
		Text		Image		Text		Image		Text		Image		Text		Image		
		F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	
Peace	Universal V.	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
	Local V.	2	4	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5
	Total	2	4	3	6	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	8
Respect	Universal V.	12	23	9	19	5	14	4	6	1	10	2	12	10	30	16	20	59
	Local V.	4	8	2	4	5	14	2	3	1	10	7	41	3	9	11	14	35
	Total	16	31	11	23	10	28	6	6	2	20	9	53	13	39	27	34	94
Love	Universal V.	7	13	5	11	1	3	2	3	0	0	2	12	0	0	0	0	17
	Local V.	4	8	2	4	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	8
	Total	11	21	7	15	1	3	3	5	0	0	2	12	0	0	1	1	25
Cooperation	Universal V.	3	6	3	6	0	0	5	8	0	0	1	6	1	3	4	5	17
	Local V.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	3
	Total	3	6	3	6	0	0	5	8	0	0	1	6	1	3	7	9	20

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Happiness	Universal V.	7	13	7	15	2	6	8	13	0	0	2	12	0	0	2	3	28
	Local V.	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	4	5
	Total	7	13	8	17	2	6	8	13	0	0	2	12	1	3	5	6	33
Honesty	Universal V.	1	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Local V.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
Humility	Universal V.	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	2
	Local V.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	2
Responsibility	Universal V.	4	8	2	4	16	44	24	38	5	50	1	6	9	27	4	5	65
	Local V.	0	0	2	4	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	6	3	9	10	13	18
	Total	4	8	4	8	16	44	26	41	5	50	2	12	12	36	14	18	83
Simplicity	Universal V.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Local V.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tolerance	Universal V.	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	2
	Local V.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	2

Freedom	Universal V.	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
	Local V.	3	6	2	4	4	11	2	3	1	10	0	0	2	6	6	8	20
	Total	4	8	3	6	4	11	2	3	1	10	0	0	2	6	7	9	23
Unity	Universal V.	3	6	5	11	1	3	11	17	0	0	1	6	0	0	10	13	31
	Local V.	0	0	3	6	0	0	1	2	2	20	0	0	1	3	6	8	13
	Total	3	6	8	17	1	3	12	19	2	20	1	6	1	3	16	20	44
	TOTAL	52	100	47	100	36	100	63	100	10	100	17	100	33	100	79	100	337

When Table 3 is examined, it is observed that Units 1, 2, and 3 are included in 3rd GLST -1, while Unit 4 is included in 3rd GLST -2. As can be seen in the table, a total of 337 value expressions, both universal and local, were identified in the texts and visuals in 3rd GLST 1 and 2. In the textbooks, 230 (68.25%) universal values and 107 (31.75%) local values were identified. It was determined that local values were assigned less than half the space compared to universal values. The values identified in the books, in order of frequency, are: respect, responsibility, unity, happiness, love, freedom, cooperation, peace, honesty, humility, and tolerance. It was noted that that the values of honesty, humility, tolerance, and simplicity—especially the value of simplicity, which was not addressed at all—were lacking in terms of imparting both universal and local values in 3rd GLST 1 and 2.

3rd GLST -1 contains 225 pieces of content expressing values. Of these value expressions, 98 appear in texts and 127 in images/visuals. In the first unit of 3. GLST-1, there are a total of 99 pieces of content expressing values, with 52 in texts and 47 in images. The most common values in the texts of the first unit are respect ( $f=16$ ) at 31%, which constitutes 75% universal ( $f=12$ ) and 25% local ( $f=4$ ) values. The least common values in the texts of the first unit are honesty ( $f=1$ ) and humility ( $f=1$ ), both at 2%. The values of simplicity and tolerance are not included in the texts of the first unit. Similarly, in the images of the first unit, the most frequent values are respect ( $f=11$ ) at 23%, followed by happiness ( $f=8$ ) and unity ( $f=8$ ), both at 17%. Respect, 82% of which is universal ( $f=9$ ) and 18% local ( $f=2$ ), is the most common value. Honesty, humility, tolerance, and simplicity are not represented in the images of the first unit.

In the second unit, there are 99 pieces of content expressing values in total, with 36 in texts and 63 in images. The most common value in the texts of the second unit is responsibility ( $f=16$ ) at 44%, all of which is universal. The next most common value is respect ( $f=10$ ) at 28%. The least common values in the texts of the second unit are love ( $f=1$ ), honesty ( $f=1$ ), tolerance ( $f=1$ ), and unity ( $f=1$ ), each at 3%. Peace, cooperation, humility, and simplicity are not included in the texts of the second unit. The most frequent value in the images of the second unit is responsibility ( $f=26$ ) at 41%, with 92% being universal ( $f=24$ ) and 8% local ( $f=2$ ). The least frequent values in the images are love ( $f=3$ ) at 5%, freedom ( $f=2$ ) at 3%, and peace ( $f=1$ ) at 2%. Honesty, humility, simplicity, and tolerance are not represented in the images of the second unit.

In the third unit, there is a total of 27 pieces of content expressing values, with 10 in texts and 17 in images. The most common value in the texts

of the third unit is responsibility ( $f=5$ ), at 50%, all of which is universal. The least common values in the texts are respect ( $f=2$ ) and unity ( $f=2$ ), each at 20%, followed by freedom ( $f=1$ ) at 10%, which is a local value. The remaining 8 values are not represented in the texts of the third unit. The most common value in the images of the third unit is respect ( $f=9$ ) at 53%, with 22% being universal ( $f=2$ ) and 78% local ( $f=7$ ). The least common values in the images are love ( $f=2$ ), happiness ( $f=2$ ), responsibility ( $f=2$ ), cooperation ( $f=1$ ), and unity ( $f=1$ ), each at 6%. Peace, honesty, humility, simplicity, tolerance, and freedom are not represented in the images of the third unit.

In the fourth unit, a total of 112 pieces of content expressing values were identified, with 33 in texts and 79 in images. The most common values in the texts of the fourth unit are respect ( $f=13$ ) at 39%, followed by responsibility ( $f=12$ ) at 36%. Respect, with 77% universal ( $f=10$ ) and 23% local ( $f=3$ ), is the most common value. The least common values in the texts are freedom ( $f=2$ ) at 6%, followed by cooperation ( $f=1$ ), happiness ( $f=1$ ), honesty ( $f=1$ ), humility ( $f=1$ ), tolerance ( $f=1$ ), and unity ( $f=1$ ), each at 3%. Peace, love, and simplicity are not represented in the texts of the fourth unit. The most common values in the images of the fourth unit are respect ( $f=27$ ) at 34%, followed by unity ( $f=16$ ) at 20%, and responsibility ( $f=14$ ) at 18%. Respect, with 59% universal ( $f=16$ ) and 41% local ( $f=11$ ), is the most common value. The least common values in the images are peace ( $f=2$ ) at 3% and love ( $f=1$ ) at 1%. Honesty, humility, simplicity, and tolerance are not represented in the images of the fourth unit.

In conclusion, it was found that the most frequently represented value in the texts and visuals of 3rd GLST 1 and 2 is "respect," followed by "responsibility" and "unity." The least represented values are "tolerance," "humility," and "honesty." It was also found that the value of "simplicity," which is part of UNESCO's defined core values, is not represented at all in 3rd GLST 1 and 2.

### ***Findings related to the second research question***

The second research question of the study is: "What are teachers' views on the concepts of 'values' and 'values education'?" The findings obtained from the interviews are presented under this heading.

**Table 4.** Frequency distribution of teachers' views on defining the concepts of "values" and "values education."

Themes	Codes*	F
Knows values education.	Values can be classified as cultural and universal.	7
Doesn't know values education.	Values cannot be classified; they should be taught as a whole.	4
	A cultural and social classification can be made.	1
	A national and religious classification can be made.	1
	Democratic values are the most important.	1
Total		14

\*Participants could specify multiple codes.

As illustrated in Table 4, half of the teachers (f=7) demonstrated an understanding of the concept of values education. These participants asserted that values can be systematically categorized into cultural and universal dimensions. Conversely, the remaining half (f=7) could not provide a definition of values education that aligns with the academic literature. Among those unfamiliar with the concept, a majority (f=4) contended that values should be imparted holistically rather than classified. A smaller subset of this group posited that values can be categorized into cultural and social domains (f=1), national and religious domains (f=1), or emphasized that democratic values hold paramount significance (f=1).

Some of the teachers' perspectives on values education are as follows:

*"In my opinion, values are among the most fundamental elements that bring individuals within a society closer together and ultimately define the essence of a community. These include love, respect, tolerance, commitment, honesty, justice, trust, freedom, and ethical or unethical behaviors within society. I believe values can be classified. Specifically, I would categorize them as cultural values, which belong to a particular society, and universal values, which are significant across all societies." (T7)*

*"Some values are specific to a given society and are evaluated within the framework of that society's norms. However, certain values are universal, recognized worldwide, and accepted within that society as well. Therefore, I believe values should be classified into cultural and universal categories." (T11)*

*"Speaking in the context of primary education, I do not think classification is particularly necessary at the primary school level. However, I believe a basic distinction can be made between national s and religious values." (T8)*

In conclusion, the findings indicate that half of the participating teachers demonstrated an understanding of the definition of values education consistent with the academic literature. The other half, however, could not provide a definition of values education that aligns with the literature.

***Findings related to the third research question***

The third research question of the study was formulated as follows: *"What are teachers' perspectives on the extent to which universal value judgments are represented in the images and texts of the 3rd GLST?"* Within this framework, the findings obtained from the interviews are presented under this section.

**Table 5.** Frequency distribution of teachers' views on the representation of universal values in the images and texts of the 3rd GLST.

Themes	Codes*	f
High	Women's rights are given limited coverage, but it is sufficient.	1
	Universal values are adequately represented	4
Moderate	Universal values are included but should be further supported.	5
	Universal values are adequately represented.	2
	Women's rights could be addressed in more detail.	3
	Issues related to bullying should be included in the book.	1
Low	Universal values are adequately represented.	1
	Universal values are not sufficiently addressed.	2
	Women's rights are not included.	2
	The book is overly complex.	1
Total		2
		2

\*Participants could specify multiple codes

As shown in Table 5, the majority of teachers indicated that universal values are represented to a moderate degree (f=11) in the images and texts of the 3rd GLST. Among those who considered the representation to be moderate, the majority (f=5) stated that while universal values are included, they should be further reinforced. A smaller proportion of teachers believed that universal values are represented to a high degree (f=5) or a low degree (f=6). Among those who perceived a high degree of representation, the majority (f=4) asserted that universal values are adequately covered. Conversely, among teachers who expressed the opinion that universal values are represented to a low degree, the majority (f=2) argued that such values are not sufficiently addressed in the books.

Some of the teachers' views on this matter are as follows:

"I believe that universal values are adequately represented in the texts and images of textbooks. In fact, there are quite a few well-developed aspects within the curriculum. Apart from women's rights, other rights are sufficiently covered. If I were to rate it, I would say 'high'." (T9)

"Perhaps in the past, they were hardly included in textbooks, but I started teaching with the new textbooks. I did work with the older ones for a short period, and they contained almost nothing in this regard. However, the current books include human rights, children's rights, and animal rights, which are reinforced through images and activities. If I were to rate it, I would say 'moderate'." (T2)

"I think they should be further reinforced. They are indeed included, and the current coverage is good, but with additional support—particularly through visuals—I believe these values could leave a stronger impression on children's memories." (T12)

"I do not believe that universal values are sufficiently represented. In fact, I think the current life sciences textbooks need some reorganization. The book is quite disorganized—it jumps from one topic to another, and all topics are covered too briefly." (T6)

The findings indicate that the majority of participating teachers believe that universal values are represented to a moderate degree in the 3rd GLST. A minority, however, holds the view that universal values are represented to either a high or low degree.

#### **Findings related to the fourth research question**

The fourth research question of the study was formulated as follows: "What are teachers' perspectives on the extent to which Cypriot Turkish cultural values are represented in the images and texts of the 3rd GLST?" Within this framework, the findings obtained from the interviews are presented under this section.

**Table 6** Frequency distribution of teachers' views on the representation of Turkish Cypriot cultural values in the images and texts of the 3rd GLST.

Themes	Codes*	F
Moderate	Greater emphasis should be placed on Turkish Cypriot cultural values.	5
	Turkish Cypriot cultural values are included but should be further reinforced.	2
	Turkish Cypriot cultural values are adequately represented.	1
	The section on Turkish Cypriot culture should be integrated into other subjects.	1
Low	These values are included in the textbook; however, their implementation depends on the teacher.	2
	Tolerance and hospitality are not addressed at all.	1
	Turkish Cypriot cultural values are not sufficiently represented	2

Total	14
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\*Participants could specify multiple codes

As shown in Table 6, more than half of the teachers (f=9) indicated that Turkish Cypriot cultural values are represented to a moderate degree in the images and texts of the 3rd GLST. Among those who expressed the belief that Turkish Cypriot cultural values are represented to a moderate degree, the majority (f=5) asserted that greater emphasis should be placed on Turkish Cypriot cultural values. Fewer than half of the teachers, however, believed that Turkish Cypriot cultural values are represented to a low degree (f=5). Among those who perceived the representation to be low, the majority (f=2) stated that although Turkish Cypriot cultural values are included in the textbooks, their inclusion depends on the teacher. Additionally, they indicated that Turkish Cypriot cultural values (f=2) are not sufficiently represented.

Some of the teachers' views on this topic are as follows:

*"Turkish Cypriot cultural values are mostly addressed through food in our books. Tolerance, however, should be addressed more. It's not enough. These thoughts apply to both images and texts. If I were to rate it, I would say it's very low." (T9)*

*"Yes, it's included, but is it sufficient? I don't think so. I would have preferred it to be a bit more. There are indeed people from different cultures, such as those from Turkey or foreign nationals, but in the end, we live in the TRNC, and I would prefer more emphasis on our culture. Of course, it is still emphasized in the book, but I would have liked it to be more. If I were to rate it, I would say moderate." (T13)*

*"That's a good question. We do cover Turkish Cypriot culture in detail, but tolerance and hospitality have not been mentioned at all... For instance, we have covered our famous artists, our foods, our dances, our music, and our clothing extensively. We even celebrated Cyprus Day by bringing food, playing music, and wearing traditional clothing. However, the aspect of our culture where people are hospitable and tolerant, I would say there is very little of that. It feels like I spoke about it myself, but I don't recall it being mentioned in the book." (T11)*

As a result, it was determined that the majority of the participating teachers believe that the values of Turkish Cypriot Culture are addressed at a moderate level in the images and texts in the 3rd-grade Social Studies and Life Skills books. A small portion of the teachers, however, feel that these values are addressed at a low level.

### ***Findings regarding the fifth research question***

The fifth research question of the study is "What are the teachers' views regarding the deficiencies they observe in the inclusion of values in the

images and texts of the 3rd-grade Social Science and textbooks?" In this context, the findings obtained from the interviews are presented under this heading.

**Table 7** Deficiencies and proposed solutions regarding the inclusion of values in the images and texts of the 3rd-grade Life Science textbooks, as identified by teachers.

Themes	Codes*	f
Shortcomings	-Some values should be added to the book.	10
	-Things related to our culture.	6
	-Applying values.	4
Suggestion	-Values that should be added:	29
	Tolerance	7
	Empathy	3
	Peer bullying	3
	Hospitality	3
	Responsibility	2
	Women's rights	2
	Respect	2
	Morality	1
	Patience	1
	Waiting in line	1
	Equality	1
	Cooperation	1
	Peace	1
Self-confidence	1	
No shortage	-Values that would support Cypriot Turkish Culture	6
	Texts from real-life experiences	1
	Broader examples	1
No shortage	The book is sufficient; there are no values that need to be removed.	4
		3
	There are no deficiencies in the book	3

\*Participants could specify multiple codes

As shown in Table 7, the vast majority of teachers (f=10) indicated that there are deficiencies in the inclusion of values in the images and texts of the 3rd-grade Life Science textbooks, while less than half (f=4) stated that the books are sufficient and there are no deficiencies.

An examination of Table 7 reveals that a total of 78 different opinions were obtained regarding the deficiencies observed by teachers in the inclusion of values in the images and texts of the 3rd-grade Social Studies and Life Skills books, as well as the proposed solutions to these deficiencies. The most frequently mentioned deficiency ( $f=10$ ) was that "some values need to be added to the book." Teachers ( $f=29$ ) suggested that 14 different values should be added to the books, among which the most frequently mentioned were: tolerance ( $f=7$ ), empathy ( $f=3$ ), peer bullying ( $f=3$ ), and hospitality ( $f=3$ ). In addition to the inclusion of values, teachers also emphasized that values supporting Turkish Cypriot Culture ( $f=6$ ) should be included. Less than half of the participating teachers ( $f=4$ ) stated that there are no deficiencies in the book and that it is sufficient.

Some of the teachers' views on this topic are as follows:

*"The value we need the most, in my opinion, is empathy. We face a lot of problems related to empathy. I think real-life experiences from current events should be included in this context. Because children generally don't think about where their actions are leading." (T3)*

*"Turkish Cypriot cultural values are not given enough emphasis. Values like tolerance and hospitality are addressed very superficially." (T4)*

*"Firstly, I believe there should be an addition regarding responsibility. Respect is one of the biggest deficiencies in today's world. Children don't know their responsibilities, so that is important as well. I also think peace and self-confidence are important." (T6)*

*"I believe that some of the most important aspects of Turkish Cypriot culture, such as our foods, historical sites, folk dances, and handicrafts, are not given enough attention. Additionally, there are cultural festivals organized around the products grown in the various regions and villages of Cyprus. However, these festivals are slowly disappearing. For example, the 'Babutsalar' in Serdarh and, of course, no effort has been made towards them. We would have liked to find more examples of these cultural festivals in the book." (T7)*

As a result, the vast majority of participating teachers stated that there are deficiencies regarding values in the 3rd-grade Life Science textbooks and provided solutions to address these deficiencies. A small proportion of the teachers, however, indicated that there are no deficiencies regarding values in the books and that sufficient emphasis is given to values.

### ***Findings regarding the sixth research question***

The seventh research question of the study is "What are the teachers' views on the relationship between images and texts in the 3rd-grade Life Sciences textbooks in terms of values?" In this context, the findings obtained from the interviews are presented under this heading.

**Table 8** Frequency distribution of teachers' views on the relationship between images and texts in the 3rd-grade Life Science textbooks in terms of values.

Themes	F
Supports	10
Does not Support	4
Total	14

As can be seen in Table 8 above, the vast majority of teachers (f=10) stated that the images and texts in the 3rd GLST support each other. In contrast, less than half of the teachers (f=4) indicated that the texts and images do not sufficiently support each other.

Some of the teachers' views on this topic are as follows:

*"Texts and images support each other, and there are very good activities." (T5)*

*"They support each other. Appropriate things are generally selected. For instance, if the topic is drought, there would be an image of drought; if it's about a forest fire, there would be an image of a burned forest. And if we are talking about values, such as in the culture section, images of our clothes and foods, everything was selected correctly. They were really good." (T11)*

*"I think it's quite consistent, and I find the relationship between the images and texts very effective. Texts and images must definitely support each other. Because a third-grade child looks at the images, and the images capture their attention." (T12)*

*"The relationship between the texts and images is superficial. They are not detailed images that express what is being discussed; they seem to be images placed just to fill space. Texts and images must definitely support each other." (T2)*

As a result, the vast majority of participating teachers in the study stated that the images and texts in the 3rd GLST definitely support each other. A very small portion of the teachers, however, indicated that the texts and images do not sufficiently support each other.

When the findings from the document analysis and interview analysis are considered together, the following conclusions can be drawn. Based on the interview analysis, it can be said that the teachers could not sufficiently describe the concept of values education. This is because only half of the participating teachers provided a definition of values education that aligns with the literature.

The interview analysis also revealed that, according to the teachers, both universal and local values are given "moderate" emphasis in the 3rd GLST. Similarly, document analysis showed that of the 12 values identified by UNESCO, only peace, honesty, humility, and tolerance were mentioned minimally, while the value of simplicity was not included at all. Therefore, it can be said that both universal and local values are addressed at a moderate level in the textbooks. Teachers reflected the opinion that there are deficiencies regarding the inclusion of universal and local values in the textbooks. They also

mentioned that values need more support in the 3rd GLST, and some values should be given more attention. Additionally, they suggested that certain values need to be added to the books, including tolerance, empathy, peer bullying, and hospitality. The findings from the document analysis, especially regarding the absence of simplicity, peace, honesty, humility, and tolerance in the 3rd GLST, are consistent with those obtained from the interview analysis.

## Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study were obtained by examining the presence of values in the texts and images of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Life Science textbooks, also gathering the opinions of 14 3rd grade primary school teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. While these findings cannot be generalized to all teachers, they can be considered reliable data within this group. The teacher views included in the research results and the conclusions drawn from these views discussed in the discussion section are valid for this group and were evaluated within the context of the 14-teacher participant group.

According to the data obtained from the study, when examining the inclusion of values in the texts and images of the 3rd-grade Life Science textbooks 1 and 2, a total of 337 value expressions were found across both books. Of these, 131 were found in the texts, and 206 in the images/visuals. The most frequently emphasized value in the 3rd-grade textbooks was found to be respect, which appeared 94 times. The second most frequent value was responsibility, which appeared 83 times in the textbooks. This finding regarding respect aligns with the research conducted by Hatay Uçar & Çetinkaya (2021), Erbaş & Başkurt (2021) and Gündoğan (2020), while the finding regarding responsibility is consistent with the studies of Polat & Atalay (2021) and Güzel & Ergen (2014). In William Neilsen's (2005) study, the importance of teaching values such as resilience, social justice, respect, and responsibility was emphasized. The fact that respect and responsibility are given significant attention in the textbooks aligns with William Neilsen's (2005) perspective.

In contrast to this study, another research by Öztürk & Özkan (2018) found that the most emphasized value in the examined textbooks was love. Furthermore, the values that were least emphasized in the 3rd-grade Life Science textbooks were tolerance, humility, and honesty. In Öztürk & Özkan's (2018) study, the least emphasized value was "hospitality," which does not align with the findings of the current study. It is thought that the differences in these findings arise from the distinctions in values and priorities that different countries aim to impart through their educational materials.

In their study, Powney et al. (1995) asked primary school teachers about the values they most adopted within their schools and classrooms. According to their responses, the most prominent values were respect, honesty, self-esteem, courtesy, respect for others, consideration for others, and cooperation. Additionally, the values that teachers adopted in their classrooms were nearly identical: consideration for others, cooperation, self-esteem, honesty, courtesy, independence, and caring for others. Teachers also stated that these values are crucial for children's individual development, social adaptation, developing life values, and maximizing learning.

In the study, it was found that half of the teachers defined values education in a way that aligns with the literature, while the other half could not define it in the same manner. More than half of the teachers who did not define values education correctly stated that values cannot be classified and should be taught as a whole. Fewer than half of the participants who were unsure about the definition of values education indicated that cultural and social classifications can be made, and that national, religious, and democratic values are the most important values.

The concept of values is defined in different ways. According to Rath et al. (1978), values are considered general guides for behavior based on personal experiences. According to McAllister (1986), values are the elements that indicate how a person decides to live their life. Values education is concerned with developing children's awareness and understanding of human, social, cultural, ethical, and global values and teaching them how to behave as responsible, happy citizens in society (Read, 2016). It is understood that values education emphasizes global value judgments; however, the inability of half of the teachers in this study to provide a definition of values education that encompasses global value judgments indicates a lack of knowledge regarding values education.

In the study by Thornberg & OĐuz (2013), teachers in Sweden and Turkey largely defined values education as a daily practice, using informal language and demonstrating a lack of professional knowledge. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Thornberg & OĐuz's (2013) research.

In this study, the vast majority of teachers stated that universal values were given moderate attention in the 3rd-grade Life Science textbooks. A portion of the teachers indicated that the degree to which universal values were included in the textbooks varied, with some stating that it was either high or low. It was also found that the majority of teachers believed that the values of Turkish Cypriot Culture were moderately

included in the 3rd-grade textbooks, while a small minority felt that these values were inadequately included.

The majority of teachers stated that there were deficiencies regarding values in the 3rd-grade textbooks and provided suggestions for addressing these shortcomings. According to the teachers, some values, particularly those related to our culture, need to be added to the textbooks. They specifically suggested that values such as tolerance, empathy, peer bullying, and hospitality should be added. On the other hand, a small proportion of teachers stated that there were no deficiencies regarding values and that sufficient attention was given to them in the textbooks.

In the study by Fernández Espinosa & López González (2023), which included 17 different countries, it was found that the most promoted values in primary schools were generosity, respect, responsibility, charity, joy, honesty, and empathy. These findings indicate that values such as respect and responsibility are important and promoted in every society, and it is also suggested that empathy be included in textbooks, aligning with the teachers' recommendations in this study. These results are consistent with the findings of this research. However, the emphasis on values such as tolerance, peer bullying, and hospitality in this study does not align with the results of the previously mentioned study, and this discrepancy is thought to be due to societal and cultural values and needs.

In this study, the vast majority of teachers stated that the images and texts in the 3rd-grade textbooks supported each other. A very small portion of the teachers stated that the texts and images did not sufficiently support each other.

The study found that the values of tolerance, humility, and honesty were given minimal attention in the 3rd-grade textbooks, and based on this result, it is recommended that these values be more frequently included in the textbooks. Furthermore, in order to help children become acquainted with and develop these values, it is suggested that different activities and lesson contents that incorporate these values be designed and implemented.

Given that half of the teachers have limited and incomplete knowledge regarding values education, it is essential for them to be better informed and trained. In this regard, it is recommended that teachers receive in-service training to address their knowledge gaps.

It was found that the frequency with which universal values and Turkish Cypriot Cultural values were included in the 3rd-grade textbooks was moderate. Furthermore, the general opinion was that there were deficiencies regarding values in the books. Based on these results, it is recommended that textbooks include universal values and values related to

Turkish Cypriot Culture more frequently, and additionally, in light of teacher feedback, values such as tolerance, empathy, peer bullying, and hospitality should be added to the 3rd-grade Social Studies and Life Skills textbooks.

**Competing interest** | *On behalf of the authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest*

**Data availability** | *The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.*

**Ethical approval** | *This study was ethically approved by the Atatürk Teacher Training Academy Ethical Committee (Ethics approval number G/131/25).*

**Informed consent** | *Written informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.*

**Statement on the Use of AI Tools** | *In this study, the article, written in Turkish, was translated into English using artificial intelligence tools like OpenAI GPT-5 and Google Translate. However, the final English version of the text was prepared by the authors. After the final English version was finalized, the English version of the article was proofread, and the final English version was finalized.*

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