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## Investigation of students' perceptions of national identity

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### Abstract

The concept of identity is described as a set of characteristics that an individual or a group of individuals possess and what makes them unique and different from others. In other words, identity is about culture, social life, traditions and customs as well as attitude, perception and a belief system of people. The identity which is unique to a particular nation and brings together individuals with feelings of belonging to a particular community is called a national identity. National identity is the expression of belonging to a national culture. The National Identity Perception Scale developed by Gelisli was used to collect the data. Descriptive analyses (mean and standard deviation), Mann–Whitney *U* test and Kruskal–Wallis *H* test were performed to analyse the data. The results revealed that secondary and high school students possessed a high level of national identity. Moreover, it was found that gender influenced the students' perceptions of national identity.

**Keywords:** Identity, national identity, national culture.

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## 1. Introduction

Although it is considered that identity is a phenomenon that has emerged after the age of enlightenment, the history of identity is based on a long history both social and psychological (Turkkan, 2011). The social integration of human beings from the earliest periods of history to protect their settlements, to participate in cultural and economic activities, to be together for protection their lands created the structure of the state. This situation brought people who were similar in terms of their various characteristics to the process of nationalisation. Nationalised societies started to be called by different names, such as Gokturks, Indians and Egyptians. These early civilisations formed social identities whose name has not conceptually established. In different historical periods different types of identities, superficial or complex, innate or later acquired came to the fore. It depended on the cultural values of societies, their level of development and interests as well as the scope of activities. The answers to the questions 'who are you' or 'who are your ancestors' might be a lineage and historical awareness which bring the group or individual closer to the society or community. These kinds of answers of people and groups to such questions vary according to their culture, social structure and world views. However, what is obvious is that each individual has an identity. For example, a person is recognised as 'a son or daughter of that' or 'from there' in the place he/she lives if there is no information about his origin he is considered as a stranger in these places. The need to identify and to be identified is the obligatory element where the human community exists (Guvenc, 1993; Turkkan, 2011). Identity has two basic aims. The first is to identify and to be identified, which means to distinguish the individual from others and the latter is ethnic affiliation. Self-identification and social identification in society according to a certain quality are peculiar to a person, and is also a human need (Aydin, 1998). As Turkkan (2011) asserted the identification of existing qualities of each person in society and providing the certainty of each individual by these definitions can be achieved with the help of identity tags.

The concept of identity is described as a set of characteristics that an individual or a group of individuals possess and what makes them unique and different from others. In other words, identity is about culture, social life, traditions and customs as well as attitude, perception and a belief system of people. Nelson (2001, p. 6) defined identity as 'the interaction of person's self-conception with how others conceive him/herself: identities are the understanding of ourselves and others'. Identity is defined as singular as well as a plural phenomenon with its individual and social characteristics (Yildiz, 2007). Maalouf (2003) also confirmed this statement by adding that identities are neither singular nor fixed but a stable phenomenon. Identity is a concept that helps to determine the similarities, differences or certainties among people from a biological, social, political or religious point of view, which is peculiar to human beings and created by the humans (Demir & Acar, 2002). According to Maalouf (2003), identity is what makes people different from each other. Although it is agreed that in the formation of identity the blood ties are the most important factor, social factors and language are also of equal importance. Human as a social being, feels his/her own existence much deeper in the process of living with other people and makes effort to find the meaning of life. Basic identity information is uploaded to the individual by other people, unless the individual makes special efforts to establish his identity by his own (Turkkan, 2011). Identity is created through its relationship with a number of socially accepted differences. These differences are vital to the existence of identity. If they, while being different, cannot exist together, then the identity would not exist too. Identity needs diversity to exist and transforms the difference into the sameness to provide its own security (Connolly, 1995).

The fact that people are social beings, and that all societies are formed by human beings brings to mind the concepts of individual and social identity. In fact, if to consider that society is only an entity in the mind and that it is created by individuals, then only individual identity should be mentioned. However, both the discovery of the individual's existence in the society and the existence of the self-construction process in a society reveal the concept of social identity. Perhaps, it is possible to explain this with the social dimension of identity. Nevertheless, both the discovery of the existence of an

individual in society and the existence of a process of self-construction in society reveal the concept of social identity. Perhaps this can be explained in terms of social identity. In the natural flow of life, the determinative power of society and culture often prevents the individual from discovering his own identity, so that an individual can present an identity that is almost entirely projected by society as an individual's own identity. In this respect, besides an individual identity, talking about social identity becomes a kind of necessity (Onat, 2009). Identity helps an individual to develop a certain kinds of qualities, dignities and a sense of belonging, which in turn reveals differences (Dogan, 2005). Identity is a personal and social feature which distinct individuals and societies from each other and at the same time, distinguishes them from their closest relatives and others. These differences, in its broadest expression, are the characteristics of life, which are specific to people and the society (Kosoglu, 2003).

The identity which is unique to a particular nation and brings together individuals with feelings of belonging to a particular community is called a national identity. National identity is the expression of belonging to a national culture. National identity or just identity is the style of the national culture that emerges in individual and social order. Moreover, it is the type of identity shaped by national cultural elements in the historical evolution. National culture is created by the national character and refers to all the materials and spiritual values that characterises the entire life of a nation (Kosoglu, 2003; Turkdogan, 1993). National identity was developed in a collective social environment and organised network of relationships called the 'nation'. The existence of a national identity depends on the existence of a nation that represents this identity and lives in a particular region (Gunes, 2017).

National identity has a multi-faceted power, which can be seen by observing certain functions performed regarding particular groups and individuals. These functions can be divided into external and internal objective results. Economic and political areas refer to external functions. However, it is also performing more intimate, intrinsic functions for individuals within the community. The most obvious is the socialisation of individuals in terms of nations and citizens (Guibernau, 1997). National identity is the most comprehensive and essential type among the collective identities shared by the human beings. At the same time, it is one of the most important factors that hold people together.

National identity is a factual reality that makes it feel in the whole cultural field, from pride to events, myths and memories, as well as in language, legislation, institutions and ceremonies (Smith, 1991). A sense of national identity is a basic need for the social groups and individuals who live in the reality of the nation who have common thinking and way of life, who share a common past and want to create a common ideal future. The search for national identity should be viewed as an inevitable and useful effort for every society in the process of nationalisation (Gulec, 1992). The concept of national identity acquires meaning due to its values and common myths. The components of national identity that bind society and develop a sense of 'we' are fictional elements that are believed to be found their pure form in a non-cosmopolitan/public peasantry, and can be reached through this mass, which does not change or changes very little (Yildiz, 2007). The concept of identity has ceased to be a tool of social participation and identification, but rather became a political tool by the emergence of nation-states. There was no need to ancient states to identify itself with a common identity until the new state form emerged which was defined as a modern-country state (Aydin, 1998). With the emergence of nation-states, the national identities of the citizens living within the national borders start to develop other important identity forms, so that the religious and the ethnic identities that remained important had lost their old functions. The state pursued a policy of bringing together its citizens under a single identity (Simsek & Ilgaz, 2007).

Every nation found its identity in its historical practice. For this reason, every nation has its own characteristics and historical heritage. In other words, nations are institutionalised with natural constitutions composed of their national character and historical experience. Nation and national identity is among the fundamental values of nationalism. In general, nationalism can be understood as a historical form of education and culture that include ancient religious culture styles and family

education. Nationalism aims to create a unity and solidarity consciousness among people living in a country on the basis of nationality (Onder, 2002).

Zavalloni (in Beit-Hallahmi, 1989) defines identity in terms of its components: demographic variables, such as social class, gender, religion, ethnic and racial origin, are considered as the objective components of the social identity that characterise the self as a determiner. Thus, the lists of these elements are reflected in the subjective identity of the individual. The elements listed in a 'social identity set' are: gender, nation, religious origin, political thought, social class, family situation, age group and occupation. Guibernau (1997) describes national identity as a multi-dimensional concept. Even by one or another nationalist group, it can never be reduced to one element, and cannot be easily and quickly penetrate to the mind of people. National identity which is closely connected with the elements of language, religion, state, history and nationality can be considered as a form of self-expression of a nation. As Kosoglu (2003) stated identity of a society is its nationality, and identity of each society is different from others. Since it is national identity which creates a national culture, all the elements and values involved in culture determine the national identity. Language, religion, flag, history, homeland, state, lifestyle, architecture, music, traditions, customs and traditions are the main elements that build the national identity (Kosoglu, 2003).

Smith (1991) lists the basic characteristics of national identity as follows:

1. Historic territory or homeland.
2. Common myths and historical memories.
3. A common mass public culture.
4. Common legal rights and duties for all members.
5. A common economy with territorial mobility for members (p. 14).

Thus, Smith (1991, p. 14) defined nation as a group of people 'sharing a historic territory, common myth and historical memories mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all the members'. One of the main elements of national identity is the idea of patria, 'a community of laws, institutions and a single political will' (Smith, 1991, p. 10). Even if a person stays in his own community or even moves to another place, he remains a member of the community in which he was born, and remains with this identity. In other words, nation is a community of people with the same lineage. Nations are formed in the process of historical and spatial changes. This interaction affects national identity. While introducing himself or his identity, a person mentions about the place of birth (Smith, 1991).

As it was mentioned before, the history of nations started with their struggles to protect their properties in the territories they had lived. In other words, the place called homeland influences the identity of society. The soil is a necessary condition for the nation. Interaction between homeland and history are the main influential factors affecting national identity. Homeland is a place where the material and spiritual values of nation are preserved; it is geography; it is a holy place. The homeland has a more important meaning than just being a part of geography. Patriotism requires sacrifice and teaches to give something for the happiness of the nation (Aksoy, 2003; Cavdarci, 2002).

One of the fundamental elements of national identity is its history, that is, it is yesterday. The essence of the nation lies in its history. History makes the nation a nation (Sener, 2009). History is the knowledge of the past. Individuals, who consciously recognise the changes in identities social or individual, are able to re-review who they were yesterday and who they are today (Poyraz, 2009).

Another important element in the formation of national identity is the future. It should be thought about tomorrow, about what to become, who to be as well as how to shape tomorrow (Gungor, 1994). Events that take place in society, such as shared funs, victories, disasters and defeats lead to a common memory and a common identity (Ercilasun, 2009). It manifests itself in every stage of life, from the way of thinking, clothing, attitudes and behaviour, to education and entertainment (Kosoglu, 2003).

Traditions and customs are the norms which regulate social relations. They have a very important function in the life of a community. Customs and traditions which are the most important indicators of national identity can vary greatly from society to society (Erkal, 1996). National culture describes experiences, beliefs, learned behaviour patterns and values shared by citizens of a nation (Kottak, 2002). Therefore, it is thought as an image that collects all the attitudes and behaviours of a nation, the way of thinking and the way of life, the language and the unique form of relationship with the material and spiritual world. It is such a whole that is expected to be harmonised in accordance with how it is imagined and will not change so easily. This whole gives the nation its colour and identity (Aydin, 1998).

The national identity separates one national group from another according to their characteristics. These separatory functions serve to create a sense of solidarity, to express the non-conformity of the cross-border communities and produce symbols to mobilise groups of people. According to the national identity of a nation a repertoire of common values, symbols and traditions are created. Common symbols, such as flag, money, March and celebrations, serve to remind the members of the community about a common heritage and cultural relatives and strengthen the feelings of common identity and belonging to a particular nation (Guibernau, 1997).

A person is explained by language, expresses his needs through language and defines objects and events through language. The reason for the existence of language in all the elements of national culture is associated with a very important task of the language. Language is the career of culture. Language varies according to the needs of societies. Since all mankind does not use a single language, it is obvious that languages emerge in the form of national languages. Language is an important tool for preserving and transferring culture from one generation to another. Language is a personally, identity and thoughts of a person. As a result, different national languages create different national identities (Kasir, 1993). Teaching the official and national languages accepted by the state within the scope of compulsory education is one of the most important objectives of every country. Thus, compulsory education is an important tool for individuals to accept their national identity (Onder, 2002).

Religion is another element that affects identity development. Although religion is not enough to construct identity, it is not possible to speak about identity far from the religion. The role of religion in constructing identity varies depending on the level of development of a person and the society in which he lives. However, this influence could be both positive and negative (Onat, 2009; Turkkan, 2011). Religion is a system of beliefs, worship and rituals of people who believe in holiness and form unity around it. In general, religion is a formative essence and a building block in culture or civilisation. An identity can be developed among people who share a common religion with its faith and values (Cebeci, 2008; Smith, 1991).

The important role of religion in the development of national identity can be observed in the Japanese development and in the Weberian approaches. In the Weberian approach, it is suggested that religion plays a solid and constructive role as a system of ethical values in developing a national identity just as it guides social and economic institutions (Turkdogan, 2005). Religion performs important functions in preserving national identity with the values and rituals it has in social culture. It was found in several studies that religious values served an important role in preserving the national identity of Turkish communities in Central Asia. According to D'encausse (1992) and Monteil (1992), religious holidays, marriages, birth or funeral ceremonies, visiting the graves and prayers that became deeply rooted in the culture of the people and became a social habit were political tricks that were intensively used to demilitarise Turkic nations.

National identity as a collective identity also has a political function. To create and develop the national identity, appropriate social and political surrounds are required. It is necessary an appropriate socio-political surrounding for giving a political meaning to national identity as a collective identity, giving an individual's identity individual and social meaning, as well as for individual's adoption and realisation of belonging and to providing an individual sociological sense of belonging (Karpat, 1995).

The creation of this socio-political structure depends on the nation with a collective identity and nation-state which organise and control collective actions as an official centre (Connolly, 1995).

Nation-states constitute political goals for the formation of national identity with an understanding of monistic citizenship. Especially, in the formation of national identity, education is used as an important tool used by the nation-states (Gunes, 2017). Educational and other institutions tried to pursue a policy to plunge the society into the melting pot of cultural values. Especially, the emergence of public and mass educational systems is very effective in the developing national identity of a community (Hobsbawn, 2003).

Individuals during their lives, first in the family, then between the ages of 5–20, in pre-schools, then in primary, secondary and higher educational institutions develop their national identities. Schools convey to individuals the values, beliefs and norms of the society in which they were born and live, so that individuals go through a process of culturalisation and socialisation with the attitudes and behaviours they have acquired. Learning life is aimed at finding oneself and one's identity by finding out the role of the individual and the society in the social and political environment and what kind of functions should be established in the economic or political system. From this point of view, the most important element is the desire to belong to a particular place, group and values (Gulec, 1992; Gutek, 2001).

The events, symbols and historical figures which are in the collective memory but not handled yet are used to make people to accept the national symbols and values as a society. Specifically, national education, cultural policies, military service and intellectuals are responsible to develop higher national identity of society (Smith, 1991).

Education is a process of behaviour change in individual's life (Erturk, 2013). This process is aimed at developing individuals' sense of belonging to a particular community through the transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding of society. Education helps the society to gain its social identity with its beliefs and ways of life. In the formal education system, the Ministry of National Education, which is the most important decision-making and executive institution responsible for education, prepares the education system and curricula for the development of the national identity of individuals. Educational courses, programmes, textbooks and teaching materials for all the levels of education provide basic knowledge and skills, at the same time they seek to develop the national identity of individuals. In addition, activities that may help in developing national identities through implicit programmes are organised. All kinds of memorial trips and school social activities are tools used for this purpose.

### **1.1. Purpose of the research**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate secondary and high school students' perceptions of national identity. Moreover, to explore whether, demographic differences, such as gender, grade and province the students live, affect their perceptions of national identity. In line with these objectives, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived levels of secondary and high school students' national identity perception?
2. Are there any significant differences among participants' national identity perceptions according to their gender?
3. Are there any significant differences among participants' national identity perceptions according to their grade levels?
4. Are there any significant differences among participants' national identity perceptions according to the provinces where they live?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The present study is a quantitative research in which a cross-sectional survey design was utilised to determine students' perceptions of national identity. The data collected from randomly selected 342 secondary and high school students from Ankara, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Batman, Sanliurfa, Mardin and Diyarbakir provinces of Turkey. The participants in the present study were limited by secondary and high school students. Tables 1–3 illustrate the distribution of participants by their gender, grade levels and place of residence.

**Table 1. The distribution of participants by gender**

Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Female	278	81.3
Male	64	18.7
Total	342	100.0

Table 1 represents the result of frequency distribution of male and female participants, where almost 82% of participants were females, whereas only 18% were males.

**Table 2. The distribution of the participants by grade levels**

Class grade	<i>f</i>	%
7th grade	21	6.1
8th grade	147	43.0
9th grade	117	34.2
10th grade	34	9.9
11th grade	23	6.7
12th grade	342	100.0

As shown in Table 2, the eighth grade students represented the majority of the participants (43%), followed by ninth grade students (34.2%), whereas the seventh grade students represented the minority of the participants (6.1%). Table 3 illustrates the distribution of the students according to the provinces they live.

**Table 3. The distribution of the participants by regions**

Province	<i>f</i>	%
Ankara	34	9.9
Erzurum	115	33.6
Gaziantep	31	9.1
Sanliurfa	64	18.7
Diyarbakir	31	9.1
Mardin	42	12.3
Batman	25	7.3
Total	342	100.0

The frequency distribution of the participants according to the provinces they live (Table 3) shows that a significant number of students participated in the study were from Erzurum (33.6%), followed by Sanliurfa (18.7%), whereas the minority group of students participated in the study were from Batman (7.3%).

## 2.2. Data collection instrument

To collect the data, National Identity Perception Scale developed by Gelisli (2014) to measure participants' perceptions of national identity was used. The scale consists of two sub dimensions, the 16-item national identity and values and the four-item national identity—religious bonds. The internal consistency of reliability for the 20-item scale within two sub dimensions was found to be 0.93.

## 2.3. Data analysis

First, in order to describe the participants' perceptions of national identity according to their responses descriptive analyses (mean and standard deviation) were carried out. Furthermore, Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to find out whether there was any difference between male and female participants perceptions of national identity. Moreover, Kruscall-Wallis *H* test was conducted to reveal whether the perceptions of participants regarding their national identity differ according to their grade levels and place of residence.

## 3. Findings

This section is concerned with presenting the findings of the analysis of according to the research questions. To answer the first research question 'What are the perceived levels of secondary and high school students' national identity perception?', descriptive statistics was computed. The results of descriptive statistics in terms of means and standard deviations are given in Table 4.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the participants' perceptions of national identity**

Components	N	$\bar{X}$	Standard deviation
National identity and values	342	4.17	0.60573
National identity—Religious bonds	342	4.15	0.88954
Total national identity scale	342	4.16	0.59983

Overall mean scores of the participants showed that secondary and high school students had a high level of national identity since the distribution of scores were ranged as: totally insufficient (1.00–1.80) which means very weak level of self-sufficiency; Insufficient (1.81–2.60) weak level of self-sufficiency; Partially sufficient (2.61–3.40) medium level of self-sufficiency; Sufficient (3.41–4.20) high level of self-sufficiency and Totally sufficient (4.21–5.00) very high level of self-sufficiency.

When the responses of the participants were analysed in terms of the items of the scale, it was found that the items 'National unity and solidarity are one of our indispensable values', ( $\bar{X} = 4.59$ ), 'Honor, self-respect, repute, independence and ethics are the basic elements of national identity' ( $\bar{X} = 4.48$ ), 'Language is the most important element bringing the society together' ( $\bar{X} = 4.41$ ), 'The most important element of national identity is independence' ( $\bar{X} = 4.35$ ), 'National identity is comprised ideal and nation feeling' and 'I like participating in religious festivals' ( $\bar{X} = 4.34$ ), 'National identity is formed with the link of citizenship' ( $\bar{X} = 4.27$ ), and 'Religion is the most important of national values' ( $\bar{X} = 4.22$ ) indicated the highest mean scores, whereas the lowest mean scores were belonged to the items 'I like reading books about Turkish History' ( $\bar{X} = 3.71$ ), 'I am happy to participate in national holidays' ( $\bar{X} = 3.85$ ), 'I like reading books about Turkish History' ( $\bar{X} = 3.91$ ). However, the items with the lowest mean scores among the items of the scale were also indicated a high level of sufficiency in student's perceptions of national identity. These findings suggest that secondary and high school students in different regions of Turkey are aware of the significance of the national identity which is the indispensable value of national unity.

Furthermore, in order to explore whether participant's perceptions of national identity are differing according to their gender, Mann-Whitney *U* test was performed (RQ 2). The results are presented in Table 5.



**Table 5. Comparison of participants' identity perceptions according to their gender**

Factor	Gender	N	Mean Rank	U	p
I. Factor (National Identity and Values)	Female	278	181.70	6,061.0	0.000*
	Male	64	127.20		
II. Factor (National Identity—Religious bonds)	Female	278	178.13	7,052.5	0.009*
	Male	64	142.70		
Factor totally	Female	278	181.96	5,989.0	0.000*
	Male	64	126.08		

\* $p > 0.05$ .

The statistical analysis results revealed that gender influences the participants' perceptions of national identity ( $U = 5,989.0$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Statistically significant differences were found between male and female participants in terms of both 'National Identity and Values' (male = 127.20; female = 181.70;  $U = 6,061.0$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and 'National Identity—Religious ties' (male = 142.70; female = 178.13;  $U = 7,052.5$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ) sub dimensions. In both two cases, female participants scored higher than male participants which shows that girls' possess high-level perceptions of national identity rather than boys.

To analyses how identity perceptions of students are influenced by the place of residence Kruskal–Wallis H test was conducted. The results are given in Table 6.

**Table 6. Comparison of participants' identity perceptions according to their place of residence**

Factor	Province	n	Mean rank	$\chi^2$	p	Post hoc
Factor (National Identity and Values)	Ankara	34	246.78	64.059	0.000*	1–2, 1–4, 1–5, 1–6, 1–7, 2–5, 2–6, 2–7, 3–5, 3–6, 3–7, 4–5, 4–6, 4–7, 5–6
	Erzurum	115	191.00			
	Gaziantep	31	195.32			
	Sanliurfa	64	166.37			
	Diyarbakır	31	155.69			
	Mardin	42	84.98			
	Batman	25	127.98			
Factor (National Identity—Religious bonds)	Ankara	34	166.15	32.923	0.000*	1–2, 1–4, 1–5, 1–6, 1–7, 2–5, 2–6, 2–7, 3–5, 3–6, 3–7, 4–5, 4–6
	Erzurum	115	200.65			
	Gaziantep	31	196.39			
	Sanliurfa	64	172.57			
	Diyarbakır	31	140.44			
	Mardin	42	110.40			
	Batman	25	152.24			
Total National Identity Scale	Ankara	34	222.63	60.742	0.000*	1–4, 1–5, 1–6, 1–7, 2–5, 2–6, 2–7, 3–5, 3–6, 3–7, 4–5, 4–6, 4–7, 5–6
	Erzurum	115	198.47			
	Gaziantep	31	198.32			
	Sanliurfa	64	169.45			
	Diyarbakır	31	147.44			
	Mardin	42	81.80			
	Batman	25	130.46			

\* $p > 0.05$ .

From the results presented in the Table 6, it is clear that the participants perceptions of national identity are differ according to their place of residence. To determine which specific groups differ from each other a *post hoc* least significant difference test was performed. The results of the *post hoc* test indicated that secondary and high school students in Ankara (MR = 246.78) had significantly much higher results than their peers from other regions, whereas students in Mardin (MR = 84.98) showed the lowest results in term of the 'national identity and values' dimension. Gaziantep (MR = 195.32)

and Erzurum (MR = 191.0) secondary and high school students scores were more or less at the same level, followed by Sanliurfa (MR = 166.37), Diyarbakir (MR = 155.69) and Batman (MR = 127.98).

The effect of grade levels on participants' perceptions of national identity was analysed by performing Kruskal–Wallis *H* test (see Table 7).

**Table 7. Comparison of participants' identity perceptions according to their grade levels**

Factor	Grade level	N	Mean rank	X <sup>2</sup>	p	Post hoc
I. Factor (National Identity and Values)	7	21	195.07	15.631	0.004*	7–8, 7–10, 8–9, 8–11, 9–10
	8	147	150.47			
	9	117	191.37			
	10	34	157.91			
	11	23	203.39			
II. Factor (National Identity—Religious bonds)	7	21	163.69	19.237	0.001*	7–8, 8–9, 8–11, 9–10, 10–11
	8	147	150.36			
	9	117	198.44			
	10	34	154.32			
	11	23	202.09			
Factor totally	7	21	190.40	20.262	0.000*	7–8, 7–10, 8–9, 8–11, 10–11
	8	147	147.05			
	9	117	197.56			
	10	34	157.69			
	11	23	198.35			

\**p* > 0.05.

The results revealed that the grade level influences the participants' perceptions of national identity. So that, statistically significant differences were observed among the groups in terms of the 'National Identity and Values' dimension ( $X^2 = 15.63$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ), 'National Identity—Religious bonds' dimension ( $X^2 = 19.23$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) and the whole national identity scale scores ( $X^2 = 20.26$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Similarly, to establish which specific means are different *Post Hoc* test was performed. The results indicated that statistically significant differences were existed among groups because of the high scores the seventh (MR = 195.07), the 9th (MR = 191.37) and 11th (MR = 203.39) grades high scores in comparison with 8th (MR = 150.47) and 10th (MR = 157.91) grade's scores. Among the groups, the highest means of ranks belonged to eleventh grade, followed by seventh grade and ninth grade, whereas the lowest means of rank belonged to eighth grade.

Furthermore, statistically significant differences were found among the groups based on the second factor of the scale. The 11th (MR = 202.09) and the 9th (MR = 198.44) grades demonstrated higher results, while the 7th (MR = 163.69), the 8th (MR = 150.36) and the 10th (MR = 154.32) grades demonstrated lower results. So that, the highest score belonged to the 11th grade and the lowest score to eighth grade.

The same findings were found according to the whole scale where the highest score indicated the eleventh grade (MR = 198.35), followed by the ninth grade (MR = 197.56) and the seventh grade (MR = 190.40). The lowest scores demonstrated the 8th (147.05) and the 10th (MR = 157.69) grades.

#### 4. Conclusion and discussion

The results of the current study revealed that secondary and high school students possess high level of national identity. Almost all the participants strongly agreed with the statements 'National unity and solidarity are one of our indispensable values', 'Honor, self-respect, repute, independence and ethics are basic elements of national identity', 'Language is the most important element bringing the society together', 'The most important element of national identity is independence', 'National identity is comprised of ideal and nation feeling' and 'I like participating in religious festivals', 'National

identity is formed with the link of citizenship', and 'Religion is the most important of national values'. The statements with the lowest level of agreement were 'I like reading books about Turkish History', 'I am happy to participate in national holidays, and 'I like reading novels about Turkish History'. The highest degree of agreement referred to the statement 'National unity and solidarity are one of our indispensable values', whereas the lowest degree of agreement referred to the statement 'I like reading novels about Turkish History'. These results are consistent with the findings of Okur's (2013) study, in which she investigated the effect of Geography course on high school students' perceptions of national identity. Similar to the findings of this study, almost all the participants fully agreed with the statements related to the awareness of national identity. In Gunes's (2017) study about the effect of History course on high school ninth grade students gaining a national identity, the participants demonstrated sufficient level of agreement to the statements related to the national identity and consciousness. According to Erozdin (1997), the compulsory subjects in terms of national history and national geography specified by the Ministry of education play an important role in developing learners' national identity by teaching such values as homeland and historical unity.

Similar to the findings of Okur (2013), in which female students scored significantly higher scores than males regarding their awareness of national identity and the effect of geography lesson on creating national identity, the results of the present study also revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between male and female students' regarding their views of national identity. According to the whole scale and two subscales scores, female students showed more positive and higher level perceptions of national identity than male students. Gunes's (2017) research findings are also in line with these findings. He also found that female ninth grade students had higher level of national identity than male students. However, the study with the opposite result also exists in the literature, in which male participants showed a higher level of knowledge about national identity than females (Demircioglu, 2006).

When the participants' perceptions of national identity were analysed according to their place of residence, statistically significant differences were found among the students from different regions. So that, the highest level of national identity demonstrated the students from Ankara, Gaziantep and Erzurum than their peers from Shanliurfa, Diyarbakir, Mardin, and Batman. Among the regions with higher results, Ankara indicated the highest level of national identity, whereas the lowest level of national identity demonstrated Mardin and Batman. According to this result, it can be said that the ethnic characteristics of students' reveal differentiations in their perceptions of national identity. The national identity values of the students in the south-eastern Anatolia region were much lower than their counterparts from other regions. However, since these student's responses related to national identity were at the level of sufficiency, this result shows that students' perceptions of national identity were not low.

The substantial differences were also found among student's perceptions of national identity according to their grade levels. The highest level of national identity demonstrated 11th grade students, followed by ninth and seventh grades students, whereas the lowest result showed the students of 8th and 10th grades students. Similar to this study, Senses (2002) in her master thesis titled 'The Importance of social sciences course in the formation of national consciousness in primary schools' investigated the impact of social studies courses on the primary school fourth and fifth grades students' level of national consciousness. She found that, boys rather than girls and the fifth grade students rather than fourth grade students had higher level of national identity. Demircioglu (2006), in turn, found that the type of school has no effect on national identity consciousness. The reason for which the consciousness of national identity does not change in the high school's students is connected with the implementation of a common curriculum in high schools' across the country.

## **5. Recommendations**

In conclusion, relying on the results of the present study, we can assert that secondary and high school students in different regions of Turkey have a high level of national identity. However, there is

a lack of research investigating school students' level of national identity, so more studies of this type with larger samples and different learners with various levels, by conducting both qualitative and quantitative research methods are needed in Turkish contexts, to provide more convincing results.

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