



## The Value of Helpfulness: An Analysis of the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Primary School Students' Views and Their Drawings

Research Article

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**To cite this article:** Aslan, S. & Aybek, B. (2019). The Value of Helpfulness: An Analysis of the 4th Grade Primary School Students' Views and Their Drawings, *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 11 (5), 106-118.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 02.04.2019

Available online  
17.09.2019

### ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the views and drawings of the 4th grade students in the primary school towards the value of helpfulness. Having a qualitative research design, this study used phenomenological design. The research was carried out with 26 primary school 4th grade students. Convenience sampling method was used during the selection of the participants. The data were collected through semi-structured interview form and document review. Content analysis used during data analysis. The research results have revealed that primary school fourth grade students perceive helpfulness as brotherhood, love children, respect for elderly, helping the elderly, poor, beggars and sharing goods. The students have been found to put great importance on helpfulness. Besides, students have also stated that there will be bad actions, people will become cruel, and there will be no happiness and peace without helpfulness. The results of this research have also suggested that if people are helpful to each other, friendship will develop, a peace and tranquility environment will emerge in the society, a strong connection will arise among people, and there will always be goodness. When the drawings of the students related to the value of helpfulness have been examined, students have been determined to perceive helpfulness as help for the poor, the red crescent's help, and help for friends, elderly and disabled people. It has also been found that the pictures drawn by the students are collected under the dimensions of mercy, cooperation, sharing and generosity.

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#### Keywords:

Value, values education, helpfulness, phenomenological design

### Introduction

In recent years, great emphasis have been attached to inspire students for gaining the cultural traits of the society in the curriculum, and curricula have been constructed by taking these traits into account. Especially nowadays, the transfer of the values that are present in the cultural traits is highlighted. Indeed, the

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15345/iojes.2019.05.007>

curricula updated in 2017 in Turkey have laid weight on the requirement for ensuring the individuals to gain national and universal values (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; 2017d).

Value is defined by various scientists in different ways. Kızılcelik and Erjem (1994: 99) defined value as “a common thought, purpose, basic moral principles or beliefs that are deemed to be accurate and necessary by the majority of their members in order to ensure and maintain a social group or society’s own existence, unity, functioning and continuation”. Keskin (2016: 21) indicated that value is “the preferred, accepted, adopted, desired and welcomed belief, judgment, purpose, goal, aim, criteria, guide, guideline standards, and rules in the thought, judgment, attitude, behaviour and activities of humans, society, institution and ideology”. In recent years, the acquisition of values by individuals has become a vital issue for educational sciences and the concept “values education” has emerged. Göldağ (2015) defined value education as “the transfer of the values that existed in the culture and the experience of the society through the formal education program and the hidden curriculum within the school environment and the acquisition of moral behaviors by students”. The primary school curriculum includes various values waiting for the acceptance of the students. One of which is helpfulness.

Helpfulness is extending a hand to someone devoid of expectancy in return, utilizing available power and resources for the welfare of others, helping individuals with their adversities, to shoulder their burden sharing responsibilities, and heartily smoothing out one’s problems without causing a sense of discomfort (Karatekin et al., 2012: 14). Turkish language institute (TDK) defines the value of helpfulness as “giving hand for others; using available power and opportunities for the sake of others; helping someone to overcome the difficulties; sharing their burden, willingly lessening one’s current problems without leading to a sense of discomfort” (TDK, 2011).

Helpfulness has been an important value for Turkish society throughout history. In particular, societies living in Anatolia have given great importance to the value of helpfulness. As a matter of fact, *Collective Work*, a concept used in Anatolia, clearly shows the helpfulness of the Turkish society. The value of helpfulness holds various dimensions. These are (Aktepe, 2010):

1. Dedication
2. Compassion
3. Social Responsibility
4. Cooperation
5. Sharing
6. Volunteering
7. Generosity.

Helpfulness is a universal value. Therefore, it is vital to make students aware of it starting from primary school years. Nowadays, the value of helpfulness is decreasing among people. In fact, the news published in the press supports this situation. Thus, it was considered significant to determine the views and perceptions of the students regarding helpfulness by drawing and such a study was carried out. This research was expected to provide a feedback to the primary school teachers, school administrators, program development specialists and related institutions regarding the teaching of values. Upon analyzing the relevant literature, the studies were conducted to identify the students’ attitudes towards helpfulness (Aktepe, 2010; Aslan, 2017; Çelik, 2014), but no such a study was specifically published on examining the 4th grade primary school students’ views and their drawings on the value of helpfulness. With this at hand, the overall purpose of this study was to examine the 4<sup>th</sup> grade primary school students’ views and their drawings on the value of helpfulness. Thus, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the views of the students regarding helpfulness?

2. How do students perceive the value of “helpfulness” in their drawings?
3. What are the views of the students regarding the significance of helpfulness?
4. What are the views of the students about the problems they may face when people are not helpful?
5. What are the views of the students on the contribution of helpfulness to people and society?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

Phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study. Phenomenology is used to reveal the meaning of facts and to reveal a person's perception of a situation (Sıgır, 2018). Experiences of individuals have an important place in phenomenological research. Phenomenological research, an individual's situation, event, phenomenon and so on. It is aimed to reveal their perspectives (Ersoy, 2016). In this study, the phenomenological design was used since the fourth year primary school students' experiences and perceptions about the value of helpfulness were revealed through interviews and drawings.

### **Participants**

The participants of the study consisted of 26 4<sup>th</sup> grade primary school students who learn at a public school in the Eastern Anatolia Region. This study utilized convenient sampling method to determine the participants. This sampling method required to reach the participants easily. In other words, the researcher reaches a sufficient number of individuals from the existing individuals (Güler, Halıcioğlu & Taşgın, 2014). The students were chosen from the school where the first researcher works, and they were included in the study within the framework of the principle of voluntariness. Thus, the study used convenient sampling method. Of all the participants, 10 were female and 16 were male. While mother education levels of the participants varied from primary to high school, their father's education levels ranged from primary school to university.

### **Data collection tool**

The research data were collected through semi-structured interview form and document review. The semi-structured interview includes both explicit and open-ended questions and provides flexibility for the researcher in asking additional questions (Şekerler, 2015). This study employed semi-structured interview form in order to receive the students' views regarding the value of helpfulness. The interview form includes open-ended questions as well as additional probe questions. Two instructors with qualitative research experience were consulted while preparing the interview form. As a result of the feedback, necessary corrections were made in the interview form. Afterwards, the interview questions were posed to two classroom teachers and two fourth-year students and the form got its final version.

Another data collection tool used in the research is drawing-writing technique. In this data collection tool, students were distributed a drawing paper and they were asked to draw pictures about helpfulness and to explain the pictures they drew (Atasoy, 2004; White & Gunstone, 2014). In this way, students' perceptions were determined regarding the value of helpfulness. Students were asked to draw freely about the value of helpfulness. They were given 40 minutes. While developing this data collection tool, two faculty members with qualitative research experience and one doctoral student studying in the department of art teaching were consulted.

### **Data Collection**

The research data were collected in the fall semester of 2017-2018 academic year. The first researcher made the interviews through using voice recording. Permission was obtained from the school administration

and parents. In the framework of volunteerism, interview form and drawing-writing paper were administered to the participants. The data were collected between 13-24/November/2017. Interviews and drawing-writing techniques were carried out at noon in a way that did not disrupt the educational activities of the students.

### **Data Analysis**

The study undertook content analysis during data analysis. Berg (2001) defined content analysis as "careful, detailed and systematic review and interpretation of a particular material". In this research, students' views and drawings were examined and interpreted in a detailed and systematic way. At first, the responses of the students to the interview form were coded and then these codes were gathered around a theme. Likewise, the drawings of the students were also examined and these drawings were themed based on the explanations. The views of the students were presented with numbers and the letters indicating their gender (S:1, M=Student 1, Male; S:2, F= Student 2, Female) in the findings section. A qualitative data analysis program, Nvivo 11 program was used during data analysis and the findings were presented as figures.

Choosing the most appropriate methods, presenting detailed information about the participants, giving direct quotations and presenting the findings to the experts are the strategies revealing validity and reliability in qualitative researches (Güler, Halıcioğlu & Taşğın, 2014; Kızıltepe, 2015; Patton, 2005). In this study, a phenomenological design was used to determine the views and perceptions of the students regarding the helpfulness value, demographic information and direct quotations were presented and the views of the two faculty members with qualitative research experience were consulted. In this way, the validity and reliability of the study were ensured.

### **Findings**

This part of the research is presented according to sub-objectives.

#### **Students' Views on Helpfulness**

This part presents findings obtained after testing the research questions. The order of findings is the same with the order of sub-problems. Figure 1 depicts students' views regarding the value of helpfulness.

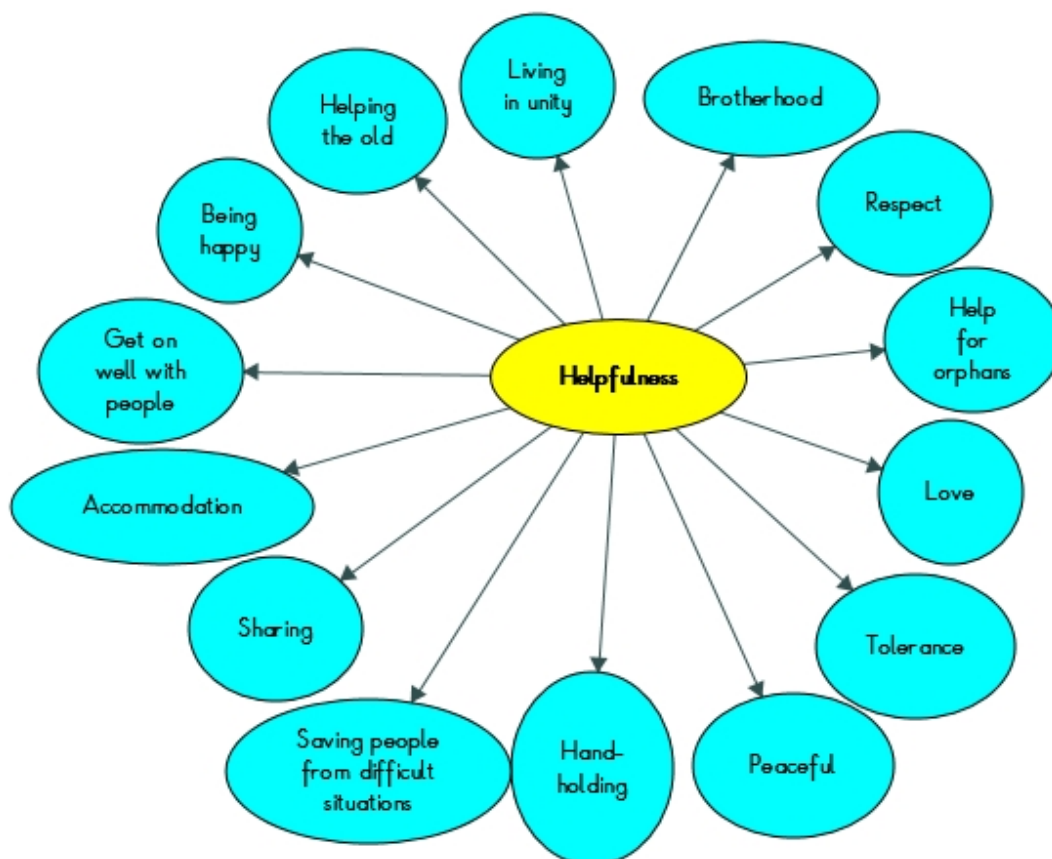


Figure 1. Students' views on helpfulness

Figure 1 shows that the students perceive helpfulness as brotherhood, love, respect, help for orphans, tolerance, peaceful, hand-holding, saving people from difficult situations, sharing, accommodation, get on well with people, being happy, helping the old, living in unity. Some students' views on helpfulness are presented below.

*"Helpfulness is a value that creates brotherhood among people and strengthens it. Thanks to helpfulness, our love for the children and our respect for the old increase."* (S:1, F)

*"Helpfulness reminds me of helping the homeless and the elders. We should give a hand when they carry something heavy."* (S:7, M)

*"Helpfulness is actually to share. I share my toys and pencil with my friend. I help him/her in this way."* (S:10, M)

### Drawings of Students About Helpfulness

The students' drawings about helpfulness are gathered under the dimensions of compassion, cooperation, sharing and generosity. Figure 2 presents students' drawings related to the dimension of compassion.



**Figure 2.** Students' drawings related to the dimension of compassion

Upon examining the drawings made by the students, more drawings were found to be made about the dimension of compassion. The students stated that helping the elders refers to helpfulness in their drawings since older people have difficulty in doing business on their own. Therefore, we need to help them. In addition, we must help a friend who falls down. The drawings made by the students also showed that we should be helpful to the disabled individuals. They indicated that people with disabilities have difficulty in doing a job alone, so we should help them. The explanations of the students are presented below.

*"In this picture, I'm helping an old uncle crossing the street."* (S:14, F)

*"I'm helping a blind man while crossing the street."* (S:23, M)

Figure 3 suggests one student's drawing related to the dimension of cooperation.



Figure 3. A student's drawing related to the dimension of cooperation

The dimension of cooperation is emphasized in the drawing made by a student. In this drawing, the student stated that they were collecting apples from the apple tree with his friend in the garden. His friend helps him to collect apples. The student's explanation is as such.

*"I am collecting apple with Zehra. In this way, we are helping each other while collecting apples."* (S:17, F)

Figure 4 shows the students' drawings related to the sub-dimension of sharing.

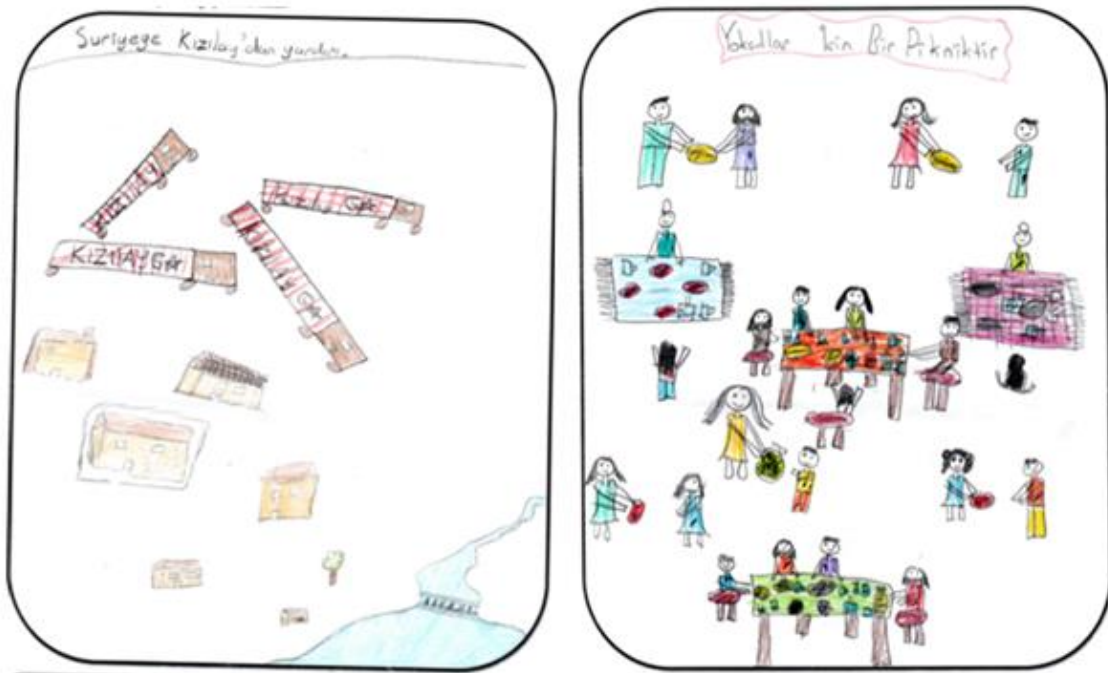


Figure 4. The students' drawings related to the dimension of sharing

Figure 4 portrays students' drawings about the dimension of sharing. In the first drawing, the student stated that they are helping individuals living in Syria through *the Red Crescent*. The student stated that s/he is helping people in Syria by donating some of his household food and toys to *the Red Crescent*. In the other picture, the student mentioned that a picnic was organized to feed the poor people in the area and everyone brought the food and shared it with the poor people and thus people helped each other. The explanations of the students are given below.

"I gave my toys to the Red Crescent. They will take my toys to Syria and give them to the children there." (S:21, M)

"We are organizing a picnic with my family and our neighbours for the poor. Everybody prepared food at home and shared it with the poor." (S:11, F)

Figure 5 shows the students' drawings related to the dimension of generosity.



**Figure 5.** Students' drawings related to the dimension of generosity

Figure 5 illustrates drawings related to the dimension of generosity by the students. In both pictures, the students pick apples from the apple trees in their gardens and give them to their friends to be generous and helpful. The explanations of the students are presented below.

"Elif came to our garden and I pick an apple for her." (S:20, F)

"I went to Muhammad's garden and he picked an apple for me." (S:15, F)

### Students' Views on the Significance of Helpfulness

Figure 6 displays students' views regarding the significance of helpfulness.

As is shown in Figure 6, students indicated that helpfulness is essential for the individual and society. The participants expressed that we will be able to better understand each other, we will be loved and respected by other people, other people will also help us, a bridge is linked among people for love and respect, friendship will be ensured, individuals will be happy and peaceful, the harmony will not be affected, good deed will be acquired, life will become better and people will get to know each other better when individuals are helpful. Some students' views are as following.

"I think helpfulness is very important. When people help each other, life becomes better." (S:3, M)

"Yes, it is important. If there is no helpfulness, there will be no peace. Everyone thinks of themselves. Nobody thinks of another. People become unhappy. We should be helpful to be happy and peaceful." (S:11, M)



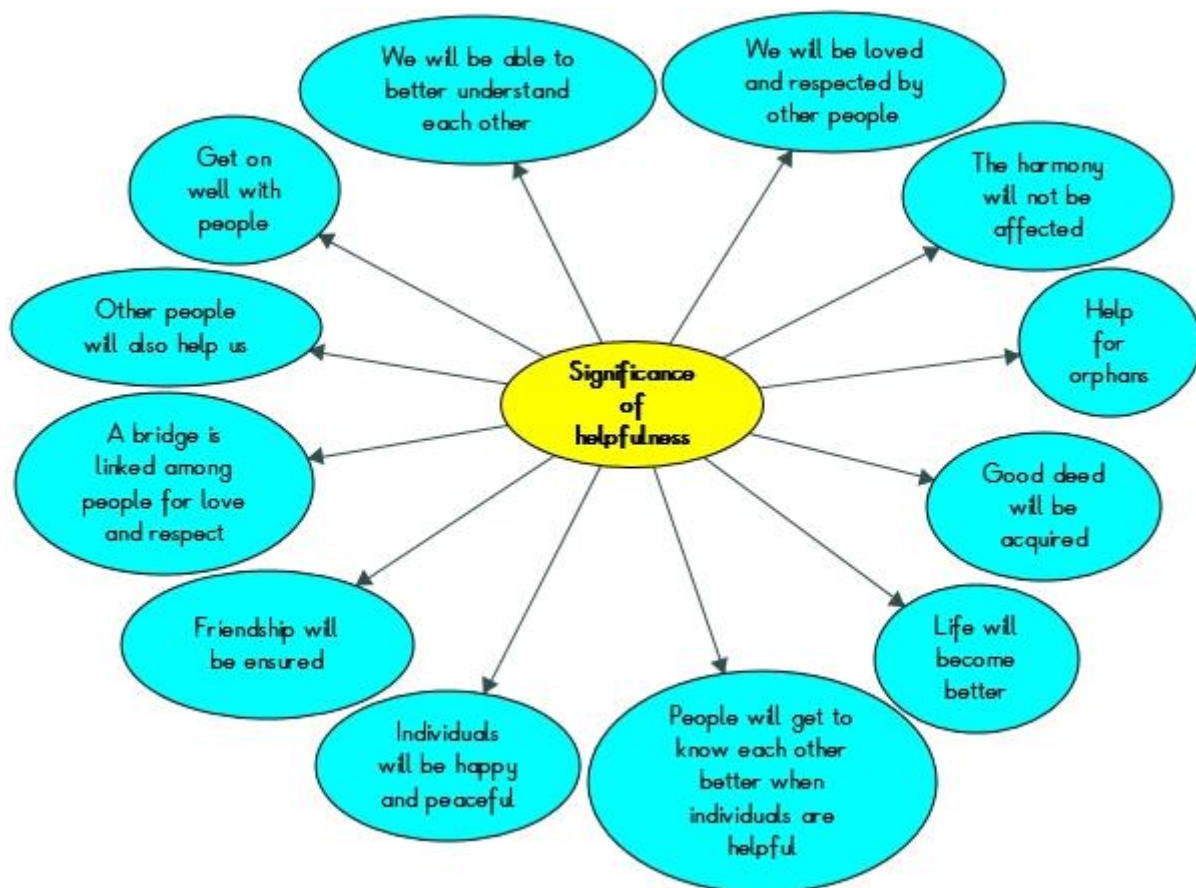


Figure 6. Students' views on the significance of helpfulness

### The Views of the Students on the Problems that may Occur in the Absence of Helpfulness

The views of the students on the problems that may occur in the absence of helpfulness are illustrated in Figure 7.

The participants noted that individuals will face various problems in the absence of helpfulness. In this regard, individuals will become cruel, selfish, poverty will occur, they will be offended, friendship will be negatively affected, needy-indigent people will appear, peace will be damaged, love bond among people will be damaged, unhappiness will emerge, society will be spoiled, society cannot survive, individuals will be unhappy, individuals will be in trouble and people will be isolated in the absence of helpfulness. Some of the students expressed their views as follows.

*"If we do not help our friend, s/he will be upset and our friendship will be negatively affected. We will also be sad and unhappy."* (S:12, M)

*"Without charity, society breaks down. Everyone can be enemies. If society doesn't help anyone, no society will survive."* (S:17, F)

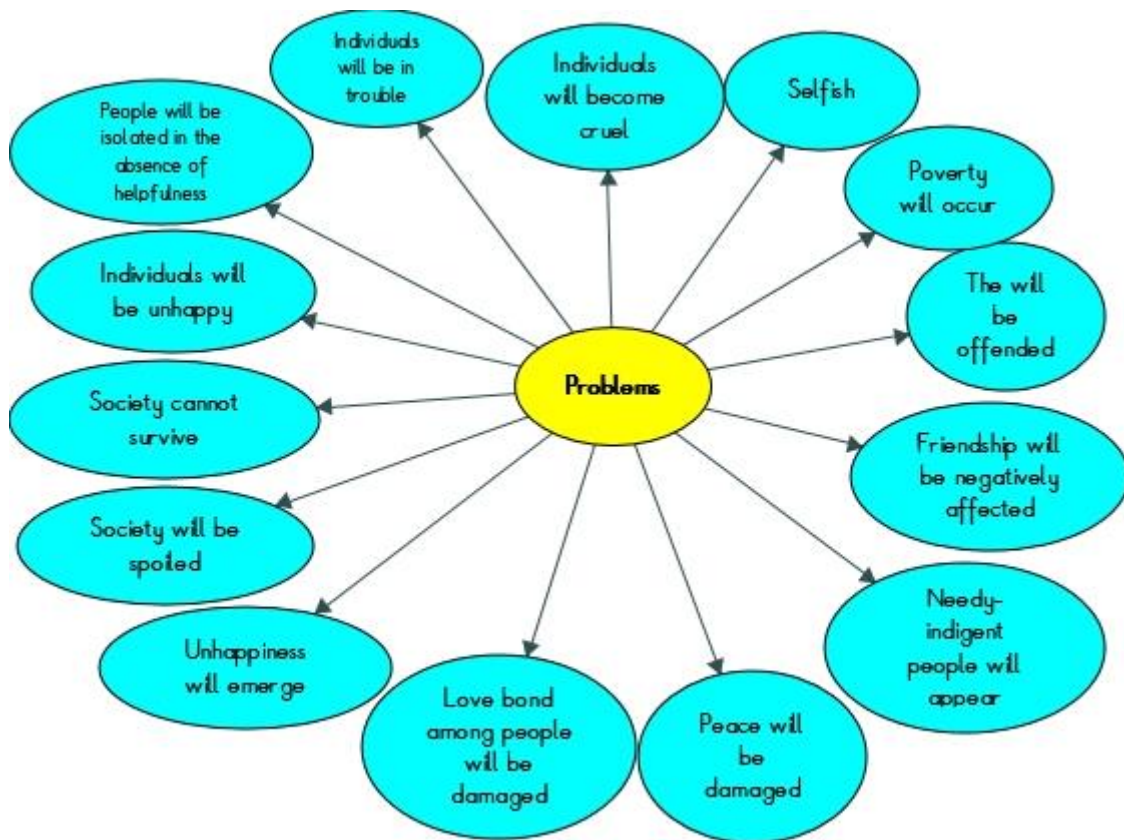


Figure 7. The views of the students on the problems that may occur in the absence of helpfulness

### Students' Views Regarding the Contribution of the Helpfulness to the Individuals and Society

The views of the students regarding the contribution of the helpfulness to the humans and society are portrayed in Figure 8.

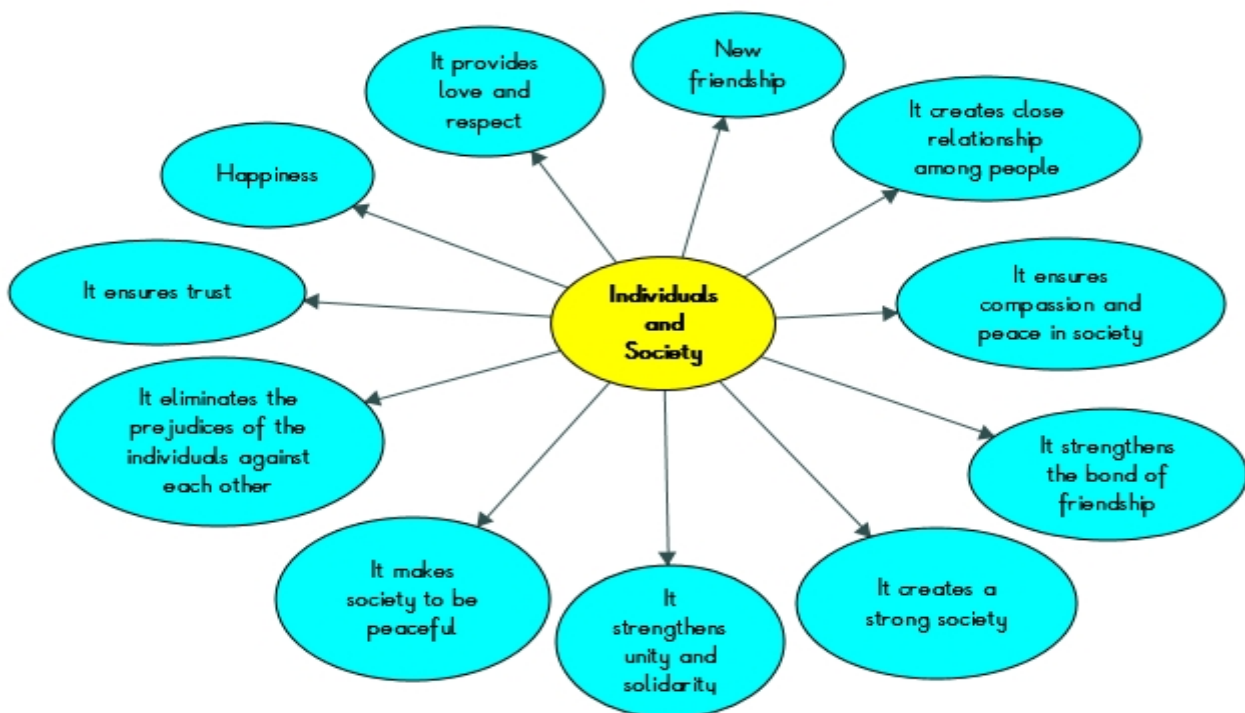


Figure 8. The students' views regarding the contribution of the helpfulness to the individuals and society

According to Figure 8, the students noted that helpfulness has great contributions to the individuals and societies. Regarding the contribution of the helpfulness to the individuals and society, students emphasized that it provides love and respect, new friendship, it creates close relationship among people, it ensures compassion and peace in society, it strengthens the bond of friendship, it creates a strong society, it strengthens unity and solidarity, it makes society to be peaceful, it eliminates the prejudices of the individuals against each other, it ensures trust and happiness. Some of the students' views are presented below.

*"When I am helpful, my friends love me more and our friendship is getting stronger. If we all help each other, there will be peace in society, everyone will be peaceful."* (S:9, M)

*"People get closer to each other. As we get closer to each other, our prejudices disappear. Our society gets stronger."* (S:24, M)

### **Discussion, Result and Recommendations**

The research findings revealed that the fourth grade primary school students perceived the value of helpfulness as brotherhood, love for children, respect for the elders, help for the old, poor and beggars, sharing possessions. This paves the way for the fact that the students perceive the value of helpfulness accurately. This result is regarded as positive by the researchers. Indeed, positive perception of the values by the students may be said to be effective in the adoption of these values. Research findings suggested that the students drew great attention to the dimensions of helpfulness such as compassion, cooperation, sharing and generosity in their drawings (Aktepe, 2010). This supports the fact that the students perceive the value of helpfulness accurately as stated above. Values such as trust, responsibility, empathy, generosity, tolerance, affection, compassion, humility and worthiness are helpful values in the internalization of helpfulness (Turan & Atan, 2008). In this regard, values can be said to be intertwined. Upon examining the students' views and drawings regarding helpfulness, they were found to associate the value of helpfulness with the other values. In the research conducted by Ersoy (2016), the fourth grade students were identified to associate the value of tolerance with the value of helpfulness, love and respect for differences. Likewise, similar results emerged in the study conducted by Aslan and Aybek (2018).

The students also put great emphasis on the significance of helpfulness. They stated that there will be bad actions, people will be cruel, and there will be no happiness and peace in the absence of helpfulness among people. The students also noted that friendship will develop, there will be peace and tranquillity in society and there will be a strong bond between people when people are helpful to each other. Helpfulness is a feeling that enhances relationships between individuals in society, strengthens loyalty, eliminates shortcomings, fills the gaps, and enriches cooperation (Aktepe, 2010: 2). Charity is one of the significant values that unite society. It can also be considered as a mortar that combines society. There will be peace and happiness in a society where helpfulness is dominant. Helpfulness is a value that is necessary for the survival of a society. Thus, it is of utmost important for individuals to internalize and transform helpfulness into behaviour. It is highly appreciated by the researchers that the fourth year students of the elementary school indicate that helpfulness is essential for the individuals and the society. That the future generations hold basic democratic and universal values will contribute to the development of our society and to reach the level of contemporary civilizations as indicated by Atatürk.

Based on the research findings, various recommendations were developed:

1. The students associated the value of helpfulness with the other values. In this respect, it will be useful to carry out studies revealing the relationship between values.
2. Conducting long-term researches such as experimental, action research and mixed research related to the value of helpfulness will contribute to the relevant literature.

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