

## Examining Social Studies Teacher Candidates' Views On Habit Of Reading Books About Political Issues Based On Different Variables

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### ABSTRACT

**Statement of the Problem:** Reading habit is a prominent element for social development Books are the primary tool for information consumption. Equipping individuals with the habit of regular and continuous reading is an important way for improving the level of welfare in the society. Although reading books is of great importance, sufficient interest cannot be attracted to this habit. In a study on the reading habit of university students, it was found that only 5% of the students spent their free time with reading, and only 26% read books outside classes (Esgin&Karadağ, 2000: 21). A good social studies teacher should have the abilities to understand and use politics, criticize politics, express views about politics, and the skill of understanding how political knowledge and attitudes affect societies. In addition, a social studies teacher should have the habit of reading books about politics so that he/she can have background knowledge on politics.

**Aim of the Study:** The aim of this study is to reveal the views of social studies teacher candidates who were final year students in the Education Faculty of Pamukkale University on the habit of reading books about politics.

**Method:** In the study, survey method was used to determine the teacher candidates' views.

**Data Gathering Tool:** The data were gathered through the "Scale of Identifying Teacher Candidates' Views on the Habit of Reading About Political Issues" developed by Tarhan (2015).

**Participants:** In the selection of the participants, convenient sampling that is one of the purposive sampling methods was used. The participants of the study were 126 social studies teacher candidates studying at the Education Faculty of Pamukkale University in the 2015-2016 academic year.

**Findings:** The research process is still in progress. The findings will be presented after the necessary analyses.

**Key words:** Politics, Teacher Candidates, Reading Books, Qualitative Research.

### INTRODUCTION

Reading habit is a prominent element for social development, and books are the primary tool for information consumption. Developments and changes need to be followed constantly in order to achieve progress within the society. Equipping individuals with the habit of regular and continuous reading is an important way for improving the level of welfare in the society. Reading is a crucial skill in terms of individuals' personal development in that learning continues outside the school as well.

Beside gaining the habit of reading, it is also important that the act of reading is performed as a skill. Instead of quick reading and scanning, students need to acquire competencies such as having a critical perspective, looking for information in appropriate sources, and associating their prior knowledge to the new information obtained.

The importance of reading as a habit cannot be neglected because learning continues outside the school as a life-long process, and in individuals' personal development. Although the significance of gaining the habit of reading is known, research shows that the desired interest and motivation in reading as well as the necessary infrastructure and opportunities cannot be ensured. In this regard, in a study on the reading habit of university students, it was found that only 5% of the students spent their free time with reading, and only 26% read books

outside classes (Esgin&Karadağ, 2000: 21). A similar result was also reported by Gömleksiz and Telo (2003) who focused on students at an education faculty.

In this case, it can be argued that the habit of not reading is common in our society rather than the reading habit. The only way to gain this habit and improve it as a skill is reading regularly. In this sense, the habit of reading can be developed in early ages (Collins, 1996; Sangkaeo, 1999).

Individuals who have the habit of reading choose the content of what they reading depending on their interests, expectations, needs, wishes and statuses in their process of reading regularly. Interest in history leads them to read publications on history, whereas the aim of achieving certain economical goals orients them towards resources that include the knowledge of economy. In higher education institutions, students have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of their choice beyond performing the profession that they aim to practice. Other than reading textbooks on their area, the desire to obtain information from different resources is about whether students have gained the habit of reading or not.

Politics, a discipline within social sciences, is perceived as distant and even undesirable in the society. Moreover, due to this perception, students are advised not to be involved in politics. This understanding stems from the fact that politics is limited to a narrow area as something that only those practising politics should know about, or it looks as if it is merely about a group of individuals coming together to criticize the ruling party. In fact, politics is a way of life that concerns everybody in the country where it is practised. Talking about politics, which is interwoven with life, without any background knowledge but based on hearsay information can neither move it further as a science, nor contribute to the humanity in terms of enhancing the standards of living. The social studies course that primarily aims to train effective citizens expects from its teachers to equip their students with the skills that effective citizens need to have. Some of these skills include critical thinking and involvement.

In the literature, no studies have been encountered which focused on social studies teacher candidates' views on the habit of reading about politics. In this respect, there is a need to make an in-depth examination of their views on this issue. The aim of this study is to reveal the views of the social studies teacher candidates who study their fourth year at the Faculty of Education, Pamukkale University, on the habit of reading books about political issues. Based on this aim, the following research questions were addressed in the study:

- Do the teacher candidates' views on the habit of reading about political issues differ based on gender and the number of books possessed?
- Do the teacher candidates' views on the habit of reading about political issues without considering any variables?

## METHOD

This study was designed based on the survey model. In this regard, some of items in the scale developed by the researcher were revised or excluded after the opinions of field experts were obtained, and the pilot implementation was conducted.

### Participants

The characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Sample**

		f	%
Gender	Male	62	49,20
	Female	64	50,80
TOTAL		100	

The population of the study consisted of the teacher candidates studying their fourth year at the Faculty of Education, Pamukkale University, in the 2015-2016 academic year. First, second and third year students were not included because they had not completed the subject area and methodological courses then. The sample comprised of 126 teacher candidates in total. As is seen in the table, 62 of these teacher candidates were male, and 64 were female.

### Data Gathering Tool

A scale developed by Tarhan (2015) was used to identify the social studies teacher candidates' views on the habit of reading books about political issues. In the questionnaire consisting of 28 items, 5-point likert scale was used.

While 5 referred to strongly agree, 1 was strongly disagree. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) of the scale was calculated as ,88.

### Data Gathering and Analysis

The scale used in the data gathering process was administered to the social studies teacher candidates on a voluntary basis by the researchers and the data were transferred to computer environment. In data analysis, t-test and one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) was performed by using SPSS 17.0 package program.

**FINDINGS and INTERPRETATION**The findings and interpretations regarding the teacher candidates' views on the habit of reading about political issues are presented in this section.

### Findings for the First Research Question and Interpretations

Whether the teacher candidates' views differed based on their gender was examined to address the first research question. T-test was performed in this respect, and the findings are shown in the table below.

**Table 2. Comparison of the Teacher Candidates' Views on the Habit of Reading About Political Issues Based on "Gender" (t-test)**

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	df	p
Female	64	105,7031	12,11149	2,296	124	0,23
Male	62	110,8871	13,18855		p>0,05	Difference not significant

The result showed that the male and female teacher candidates' views were different from each other [ $t_{(0,05; 126)} = 2,296$ ]. The level of the female teachers' habit of reading books about political issues ( $\bar{X} = 105,7031$ ) was lower than that of the male teachers ( $\bar{X} = 110,8871$ ).

Whether the teacher candidates' views differed based on the number of books they possessed was also examined with regard to the second research question. The results of the analyses are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for the Teacher Candidates' Views Based on the Number of Books**

Number of Books Possessed	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss
Less than 10 books	20	109,050	10,772
11-25 books	18	108,166	12,926
26-50 books	22	110,227	14,780
51-100 books	21	102,428	12,027
More than 100 books	45	109,688	12,851
TOTAL	126	108,254	12,867

As is seen in Table 4, the mean of the teachers who had 26-50 books was 110,227, that of those who had more than 100 books was 109,688, that of those who had less than 10 books was 109,050, that of those who had 11-25 books was 108,66, and that of those who had 51-100 books was 102,428. The results of the variance analysis conducted to see whether there were significant differences between the groups are presented in the table below.

**Table 4. Results of the Variance Analysis for the Differences Between the Teacher Candidates Views Based on the Number of Books**

	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean Square	F	p
Between-groups	903,772	4	225,943	1,381	,244
Within-groups	19794,101	121	163,588		
TOTAL	20697,873	125			

As can be seen in Table 2, variance analysis was performed to determine whether there were significant differences between the teacher candidates' views based on the number of books they had, and no significant

differences were found as a result of the analyses. Consequently, it can be argued that teacher candidates' views on the habit of reading books about political issues do not change based on the number of books they have.

### Findings for the Second Research Question and Interpretations

With this research question, it was aimed to examine the teacher candidates' views without taking any variables into account. Frequencies and percentages for their answers in the scale were calculated along with the means of all items, and the results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Frequency, percentage and mean score values related to the teacher candidates' views**

INDEX ITEMS	Strongly Agree		Agree		Somewhat Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		X
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
9. A teacher candidate who does not read books about political issues can still be a good teacher.	66	48,2	47	34,3	10	7,3	3	2,2	-	-	4,39
26. I think reading books about political issues contributes to one's development.	57	41,6	55	40,1	10	7,3	4	2,9	-	-	4,30
14. Reading different books about political issues enables one to form his/her own ideas.	52	38,0	55	40,1	15	10,9	4	2,9	-	-	4,23
23. Reading books about political issues enables one to take part in political discussions without a hesitation.	43	31,4	71	51,8	8	5,8	4	2,9	-	-	4,21
22. I like reading books about political issues.	43	31,4	66	48,2	15	10,9	1	0,7	1	0,7	4,18
17. I have a library with many books on politics.	40	29,2	63	46	20	14,6	3	2,2			4,11
24. Reading books about political issues changes our perspective to politics.	44	32,1	57	41,6	20	14,6	4	2,9	1	0,7	4,10
15. I think reading books about political issues is boring.	39	28,5	66	48,2	17	12,4	1	0,7	3	2,2	4,9
16. I think reading books about political issues would be useful to understand today's politics.	38	27,7	63	46	19	13,9	4	2,9	2	1,5	4,04
27. I think reading books about political issues develops high-order skills (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) in views on politics.	35	25,5	69	50,4	16	11,7	4	2,9	2	1,5	4,03
19. I think reading books about political issues contributes to being more conscious about politics.	32	23,4	65	47,4	20	14,6	4	2,9	5	3,6	3,91

13. Reading books about political issues enables one to have a political opinion.	34	24,8	53	38,7	32	23,4	7	5,1	-	-	3,90
25. I think it is important to read books about political issues in order to understand significant political events.	34	24,8	52	38	33	24,1	7	5,1	-	-	3,89
21. I regularly read books about political issues.	30	21,9	58	42,3	29	21,2	8	5,8	1	0,7	3,85
12th	31	22,6	49	35,8	39	28,5	6	4,4	1	0,7	3,82
28. Reading books about political issues enables us to easily express our feelings and thoughts related to politics .	32	23,4	55	40,1	24	17,5	10	7,3	5	3,6	3,78
Eleventh I think the best way to learn politics is to read books about political issues.	32	23,4	41	29,9	45	32,8	7	5,1	1	0,7	3,76
20. I prefer reading books of different kinds rather than those about political issues.	18	13,1	72	52,6	26	19	9	6,6	1	0,7	3,76
1. Reading books about political issues provides individuals the chance to be an active participant in the events about themselves and their society.	36	26,3	24	17,5	40	29,2	16	11,7	10	7,3	3,48
8. I think I can obtain political information thanks to reading books about political issues.	23	16,8	33	24,1	29	21,2	23	16,8	18	13,1	3,16
18th Reading various books about political issues shows individuals that there are different opinions and decisions as well.	12	8,8	63	46	20	14,6	3	2,2	-	-	3,015
6. I think reading books about political issues helps individuals form unique ideas for the solution of personal and social problems.	9	6,6	30	21,9	48	35	22	16,1	17	12,4	2,94
3. Reading books about political issues help individuals easily comprehend a political incident.	21	15,3	19	13,9	36	26,3	31	22,6	19	13,9	2,94
10. Reading books about political issues increases my interest in politics.	11	8	33	24,1	33	24,1	36	26,3	13	9,5	2,94

2. Reading books about political issues helps us understand the problems related to politics.	12	8,8	16	11,7	41	29,9	39	28,5	18	13,1	2,72
4. Reading books about political issues helps us understand political developments in our country and the world.	13	9,5	15	10,9	38	27,7	36	26,3	24	17,5	2,66
7. I feel my self more comfortable in environments where political topics are discusses because I read books about political issues.	6	4,4	16	11,7	30	21,9	31	22,6	43	31,4	2,29
5. Individuals who read books about political issues would more easily accumulate knowledge of politics.	4	2,9	9	6,6	15	10,9	38	27,7	60	43,8	1,88

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS** Sixty-six teacher candidates who participated in the study (48,2%) thought that a teacher who does not read books about political issues can still be a good teacher. On the other hand, 57 teacher candidates (41,6%) argued that reading books about political issues would contribute to individuals' development, whereas 45 teacher candidates (38%) thought it would provide them the opportunity to form their own opinions. The teacher candidates were aware that reading books about political issues was indeed important, but had problems in putting this into practice. The fact that many parents who grew up in the oppressive and unsteady social climate in the aftermath of 1980 prevented their children from being interested in politics, either knowingly or unknowingly, and politics being reflected as men's job only caused the young population to develop negative attitudes towards politics. Teachers are one of the most important determinants for having interest in politics and being informed of political events. All important aspects such as families, teachers, books read, peers and the media can be crucial factors in political socialisation. If teachers introduce their students the books that have a prominent mission in transferring the background of political and social events to young generations, this will help increase the amount of reading books about politics. By reading books on politics, young individuals and children gain the abilities to compare, criticise and questions the political information presented by different authors (Tarhan, 2015). In a democratic, it is of great importance that individuals have critical thinking skills as well as use critical thinking and decision-making skills in the solutions of social problems they encounter (Tarhan, 2016).

One of the reasons why the teacher candidates who thought that a teacher candidate who does not read books about political issues can still be a good teacher kept distant from politics could be that men outnumber women in real political life, and they perform politics with an aggressive attitude. It is thought that by teaching students basic information related to politics starting from elementary school to university, students would be interested in politics and have positive feelings towards politics. In this regard, social studies is regarded as a course in which students develop positive attitudes towards politics as well as questioning and evaluation skills, and that aim to train them as active and effective citizens. Therefore, social studies teachers are important in that they equip elementary school students with democratic attitudes, skills and values (Tarhan, 2015).

### SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are offered based on the results of the current study:

1. This study was conducted with a small sample in the context of reading books about political issues. Similar studies can be carried out with larger samples, and include faculty members, or teachers.

2. In addition to the courses that social studies teacher candidates take during their undergraduate education, a new course that includes basic knowledge and skills regarding politics, and addresses how critical thinking skills are developed can be included in social studies teacher education programs.
3. Experimental activities on political education can be performed with students in the social studies course to enhance their interests in politics and help them develop positive attitudes towards politics.

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