

# THE MEDIA LITERACY LEVELS OF PRE-SERVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS (THE CASE OF SAKARYA UNIVERSITY)

Nejla Pehlivan

Department of Social Studies Education, Institute of Educational Sciences  
Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey

**Abstract :** This study aims to examine the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers in terms of different variables (gender and having a personal computer). The research data were obtained from 195 pre-service teachers studying at the Department of Social Studies Education at the Faculty of Education of Sakarya University during the 2018-2019 academic year. In the study in which the descriptive survey method was used, the “Media Literacy Level Determination Scale” and the “Personal Information Form” developed by Karataş (2008) were used as the data collection tools. The research data were analyzed using the necessary statistical techniques in the SPSS program. As a result of the study, it was revealed that the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers differed significantly according to the gender variable. However, there were no significant differences in the media literacy levels according to the variable of having a personal computer. In the study, the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers were also found to be high (frequently).

**Keywords:** Social studies, pre-service teachers, media literacy levels.

## INTRODUCTION

Students are involved in intensive messaging through mass media such as television, newspaper, and the internet in their daily lives. They sometimes have difficulty in associating these messages, which they encounter via mass media, and their knowledge about these messages. Therefore, as stated by the MoNE (Ministry of National Education) and RTUK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) (2007), it is necessary to raise the awareness of children who are unprotected in the face of visual, auditory, and printed media (Çengelci, 2008).

Media literacy, in its widely accepted definition, is the ability of individuals to access media messages of various types (visual, auditory, printed, etc.), to analyze and evaluate the accessed media from a critical perspective, and to produce their own media messages (RTUK, 2016a). In our life surrounded by visual, auditory, and printed media, media literacy is becoming more significant every day (Karataş, 2008).

Many countries, which have noticed the importance of the critical-thinking skill acquired by the individual through media literacy education, are attaching more importance to the education of this course, which facilitates possessing the necessary knowledge and skills for lifelong learning (Sezer, 2011, As cited by Görmez, 2015).

In Turkey, crucial steps have been taken in the field of media literacy education in recent years. In 2004, on the Violence Prevention Platform that represented the prominent public institutions, non-governmental organizations and universities of our country, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) recommended the teaching of media literacy courses in primary schools for the first time. As a result of the preliminary preparation studies, the “Curriculum of the Primary Education Elective Media Literacy Course” was discussed and accepted by the Board of Education and Discipline of the Ministry of National Education on 08/31/2006. Afterward, the media literacy course was started to be taught in five pilot provinces determined by the Ministry of National Education in the 2006-2007 academic year and taught as an elective course at 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades of primary education as of the 2007-2008 academic year (Görmez, 2015, RTUK, 2016b).

The main purpose of the media literacy course taught starting from primary education is to raise selective students with consciousness and selective media literacy. Becoming a conscious and critical media consumer and producer, differentiating fiction and reality, and acquiring the competency of analyzing and evaluating media messages are important topics that should be included in the objectives of media literacy education (Jols and Thoman, 2008, As cited by Kızılkaya, 2016).

Social events and current issues occurring in daily life are addressed within the scope of the Social Studies course, which aims to raise responsible, active, and thinking citizens who have acquired democratic values. The purpose is to raise responsible and active citizens who have acquired democratic values. Active citizenship, which is tried to be provided to students with the Social Studies course, includes raising awareness on current issues in life, making sense of and interpreting the news in media. Media literacy is indirectly explained within the scope of the Social Studies course, whereas it is directly addressed in the “Media Literacy” course. Since the Social Studies course has active contents related to daily life, the students’ acquisition of the media literacy skill, which involves the knowledge and skills to understand and interpret the news, with the activities to be performed in this course is of great significance (Çengelci, 2008).

At this stage, social studies teachers have the most significant responsibility in the execution of the Social Studies courses, in which the knowledge, skills, and values that prepare the individual for life are tried to be structured (Çetin, 2016). As stated by Karataş (2018), although media literacy is taught as an elective course in middle schools of Turkey, social studies teachers who teach it do not take such a course during their undergraduate education. Therefore, it is crucial to teach media literacy to pre-service teachers in Turkey, while many countries of the world are trying to reflect media literacy in teacher training.

In this context, the content knowledge of teachers, who can use the media effectively and make sense of the content of media publications in line with certain criteria, is important for future generations to read and make sense of the media. Therefore, pre-service social studies teachers who will teach media literacy need to have sufficient knowledge in terms of making sense of and interpreting the messages given through the media during their undergraduate education (Çetin, 2016).

Regarding media literacy, studies were conducted by Çetin (2016) on the determination of pre-service social studies teachers’ media literacy levels, and by Basel (2017), Som (2012), and Karataş (2008) on the determination of pre-service teachers’ media literacy. Yıldırım (2018) carried out a study on the media literacy education of Turkish and social studies teachers and the correlation of this competency with some variables. Çengelci (2008) performed a study on the opinions of pre-service social studies teachers about media literacy. Altun (2014) conducted a bibliographic study including the Turkish publications on media literacy education in Turkey.

In this study, it was aimed to determine the pre-service social studies teachers’ levels of media literacy. This study is important in terms of contributing to the more quality teaching of this course by demonstrating the deficiencies related to the media literacy of pre-service social studies teachers who will teach this course in the future.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to examine the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers. In line with this general purpose, answers to the following questions will be sought.

1. What are the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers?
2. Do the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers differ by the variable of gender?
3. Do the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers differ by the variable of having a personal computer?

## **METHOD**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Of the widely used survey methods in Social Sciences, the descriptive survey model, which is applied to large groups and involves the opinions and attitudes of individuals in the group toward a phenomenon or event, and the description of the phenomena and events, was used in the study (Tanrıöğen, 2009:59).

### **STUDY GROUP**

The study population consists of students studying at the Department of Social Studies Education in Hendek Faculty of Education of Sakarya University during the 2018-2019 academic year. The study sample comprises 191 pre-service social studies teachers, including 128 female and 63 male pre-service teachers, selected via random assignment in the 2018-2019 academic year. It is observed that 67% of the students who participated in the study were female, and 33% were male.

In this study, the “Personal Information Form” developed by the researchers and the “Media Literacy Level Determination Scale” developed by Karaman and Karataş (2009) were used as the data collection tools.

The “Media Literacy Level Determination Scale” has 17 questions aimed at determining the media literacy levels of students. The 5-point Likert-type scale, comprised of the options “Never,” “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” “Frequently,” and “Always,” was used to evaluate the questions. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient obtained in this study was calculated to be .88.

The “Personal Information Form,” which was created by the researchers to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of students, included the variables of age, gender, grade level, and having a personal computer.

## DATA ANALYSIS

For data analysis, the SPSS 22 statistics program was used. In this study, based on the survey model, the media literacy level scores of pre-service social studies teachers were determined with descriptive statistical applications. The ranges considered in the calculation of the arithmetic mean scores related to the responses of pre-service social studies teachers to the questions in the data collection tool are as follows: Never ( $1.00 < X \leq 1.79$ ), Rarely ( $1.80 < X \leq 2.59$ ), Sometimes ( $2.60 < X \leq 3.39$ ), Frequently ( $3.40 < X \leq 4.19$ ), Always ( $4.20 < X \leq 5.00$ ).

Whether the scores received by the participants from the Media Literacy Level Determination Scale differed by gender and having a personal computer was identified by the independent samples t-test.

Whether the scores received by the participants from the Media Literacy Level Determination Scale differed statistically significantly by the variables of gender and having a personal computer was revealed with single-factor analysis of variance for independent samples. These statistical operations were carried out using the SPSS packaged software. In this study, the significance level was considered as  $p < .05$ .

## FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The findings on the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers are stated according to gender and having a personal computer, respectively.

Table 1 presents the findings on the descriptive statistics of the pre-service social studies teachers’ media literacy levels.

### Findings Regarding the First Problem

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the pre-service social studies teachers’ media literacy levels

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	X	SS
Mean	195	1.78	5.00	3.90	.55

Concerning Table 1, the arithmetic mean was calculated with the lowest and highest scores with respect to the responses given by the pre-service social studies teachers participating in the study to the questions in the data collection tools. Of the participant students, the pre-service teacher with the lowest mean score received 1.78, and the student with the highest score received 5.00. According to the results of the arithmetic mean calculations on the responses given by 195 students who participated in the study, the arithmetic mean was found to be 3.90. According to this result, it is observed that the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers are high (frequently).

### Findings Regarding the Second Problem

Table 2. The Independent t-Test Results of the Scale Mean Scores by the Gender Variable Regarding the Media Literacy Levels of Pre-service Social Studies Teachers

Gender	N	X	S	SD	t	p
Female	128	67.26	9.29	189	1.96	.050
Male	63	64.41	9.77			

\* $p < .05$

When Table 2 is examined, a significant difference is detected between the media literacy levels and genders of pre-service social studies teachers [ $t(195) = 1.96$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. In line with this finding of the study, the media literacy levels of female pre-service social studies teachers ( $X = 67.26$ ) are higher than those of male pre-service social studies teachers ( $X = 64.41$ ). According to this finding, the media literacy levels of female pre-service social studies teachers can be said to be more positive compared to those of male pre-service social studies teachers.

**Findings Regarding the Third Problem**

Table 3. The Mann-Whitney U Test Results of the Scale Mean Scores by the Variable of Having a Personal Computer Regarding the Media Literacy Levels of Pre-service Social Studies Teachers

Do you have a personal computer?	N	Mean rank	Rank sum	U	p
Yes	157	97.65	15331.00	2410.00	.375
No	34	88.38	3005.00		

\*p&gt;.05

When Table 3 is reviewed, no statistically significant difference is observed between the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers who have and do not have a personal computer and the variable of having a personal computer ( $U=2410.00$ ;  $p>.05$ ). According to this result, whether pre-service social studies teachers have a personal computer or not does not affect their media literacy levels.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In this study, which aimed to examine the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers, the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers were found to be high in general. This result shows that the media literacy levels of pre-service teachers stated in the study carried out by Çetin (2016) are generally at a high (frequently) level.

During the examination performed according to the gender variable, a significant difference was revealed in the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers according to the gender variable. According to the findings obtained in the study, the media literacy levels of female pre-service social studies teachers are higher than the media literacy levels of male pre-service social studies teachers.

Likewise, in the studies conducted by Çetin (2016), Karaman (2016), and Tuncer Basel (2017), the correlation between the gender variable and media literacy was examined, and it was concluded that the media literacy levels of pre-service teachers differed by gender. In the study carried out by Som (2012), it was reported that the correlation between the media literacy level and the gender variable did not create a significant difference.

In the study, no significant difference was revealed between the media literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers and having a personal computer. However, a significant difference was detected between having a personal computer and media literacy levels in the study performed by Çetin (2016). Students studying at the Social Studies Education department need to inform their own students they will teach about media literacy after graduating and starting their teaching profession. In this context, it is of great significance to determine the media literacy levels of students studying at the Social Studies Education department. It can be considered important to evaluate the results obtained in this context.

**REFERENCES**

- [1] Altun A. 2014. *Medya Okuryazarlığı Eğitimine Yönelik Türkçe Yayınlar: Bir Bibliyografya Denemesi [Turkish Publications on Media Literacy Education: A Bibliographic Trial]*, *Odü Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi*.
- [2] Basel T. A. 2017. *Eğitim Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Medya Okur-Yazarlık Düzeyleri (İzmir Örnekleme) [The Media Literacy Levels of Students at the Faculty of Education (The Sample of Izmir)]*, *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*.
- [3] Coşkun, D. 2018. *21. Yy. Okuryazarlığı: Öğretmen Adaylarının Medya Algılarına Genel Bir Bakış [21st Century Literacy: A General Overview of Pre-service Teachers' Media Perceptions]*, *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, Cilt:5 Sayı:4 S.493-511.
- [4] Çengelci, T. 2008. *Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmen Adaylarından Medya Okuryazarlığına Bir Bakış [The Viewpoint of Pre-service Social Studies Teachers on Media Literacy]*, *Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, Cilt: V, Sayı: II,25-43.
- [5] Çetin, M. 2016. *Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmen Adaylarının Medya Okuryazarlık Düzeyleri [The Media Literacy Levels of the Prospective Social Studies Teachers]*, *Adıyaman Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Yıl:8 Sayı:23.
- [6] Karataş, A. 2008. *Öğretmen Adaylarının Medya Okuryazarlık Düzeyleri [The Media Literacy Levels of Pre-service Teachers]*, *T.C. Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Afyon, Yüksek Lisans Tezi*.

[7] Karataş, A. 2018. *Eğitim Fakülteleri için “Medya Okuryazarlığı” Eğitim Programı [The “Media Literacy” Education Program for the Faculties of Education]*, Kırıkkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Cilt:8, Sayı:2.

[8] Kızılkaya, A. 2016. *Medya Okuryazarlığına İlişkin Öğretmen Görüşleri [Teachers’ Opinions About Media Literacy]*, Eğitim Teknolojisi Kuram ve Uygulama Dergisi, Cilt:6 Sayı:2.

[9] RTÜK 2016a. *Medya Okuryazarlığı Nedir? [What is Media Literacy?]*, retrieved from [https://www.medyaokuryazarligi.gov.tr/menu\\_goster.php?Guid=B7AA7732-1593-4B32-BDE5-D76E64C2A5FA&MenuId=2icerik](https://www.medyaokuryazarligi.gov.tr/menu_goster.php?Guid=B7AA7732-1593-4B32-BDE5-D76E64C2A5FA&MenuId=2icerik) on 12/30/2018.

[10] RTÜK 2016b. *Türkiye’de Medya Okuryazarlığı [Media Literacy in Turkey]*, retrieved from [https://www.medyaokuryazarligi.gov.tr/menu\\_goster.php?Guid=E56CE034-6CEB-41AE-A12C-B618EBEA461B&MenuId=2](https://www.medyaokuryazarligi.gov.tr/menu_goster.php?Guid=E56CE034-6CEB-41AE-A12C-B618EBEA461B&MenuId=2) on 12/30/2018.

[11] Som, S. 2012. *Bilgisayar ve Öğretim Teknolojileri Eğitimi Bölümü Öğrencilerinin Medya Okuryazarlık Düzeyleri [The Media Literacy Levels of Students Studying at the Department of Computer and Instructional Technologies Education]*, Anadolu Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi.

[12] Tanrıöğren, A. (Ed.), *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri [Scientific Research Methods]*, Anı Yay, 2009.

[13] Yıldırım Ş. 2018. *Türkçe ve Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenlerinin Medya Okuryazarlığı Eğitimi Yeterlikleri ve Bu Yeterliklerinin Bazı Değişkenlerle İlişkisi [Turkish and Social Studies Teachers’ Competencies of Media Literacy Education and the Relationship of These Competencies with Some Variables]*, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, Sayı:41 S:165-182.

