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The library use habits of student teachers

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Abstract

Habit of reading is lifelong continuous and regular performance of the act of reading as a result of the perception of reading as a necessity. Habit of using libraries, however, means continuous and regular use of a library by the individual with the purpose of meeting his/her intellectual requirements. Particularly for the student teachers constituting the teachers of the future having their education in the education faculties, it is expected that they have gained the habit of reading and developed the skill of using libraries efficiently. However, studies found in the literature shows that students do not have much positive attitudes for reading and using libraries. Starting from these ideas, it was attempted in the present study to determine the habits of the students of Gazi University Vocational Educational Faculty (GUVEF). Participants of the study was the first and fourth grade students of GUVEF. Sampling of the study consisted of total 406 students, out of which 205 were students of the first grade and 201 of the fourth grade of five department. With the purpose of determining the library use habits of the students, a Likert-type scale was developed by the investigators. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Demographic characteristics are included in the first part, and questions directed at the habits of using libraries were asked in the second part. Five students were selected among the first and fourth grade of each department and group interviews were performed with these students. In these interviews, ideas and feelings regarding use of libraries were asked to the students. In addition, numbers of books borrowed yearly from the Central Library of Gazi University were examined. Answers to the questionnaire were examined after the application, and percentage, frequency, t-test analysis methods were used in the analysis of data. Interviews were examined and were used support habits results. Interpretations were made according to the results obtained, and recommendations were given for the development of habits of students teachers.

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1. Introduction

Reading books has a privileged status in today's world, where knowledge and the ways it is disseminated accumulates and multiplies. It is often said that reading is not widespread in Turkey and that the young are not interested in reading books. News stories on the decline of reading and the community's dislike of reading appear regularly in the press and other media. Reading is an individual's perception that the act of reading is a need, one to

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be carried out as a life-long activity on a regular basis (Özdemir, 1991). Statistical data regarding reading habits in Turkey reveal that only 4.0 % of every 100 people read books while 61.0 % of the young do not read books. Also according to research carried out in a Turkish university, only 5.0 % of the students go to the library, 61.2 % of them stay at home and the rest, 16.0 %, go to social cafes in their spare time. It was found that 9.0% of the participants do not read at all (Bayram, 2001).

Libraries are places where the habit of reading books can be acquired. Libraries increase student success at school and they help them to acquire the educational knowledge necessary for adapting to changing and evolving circumstances (Curley, 1990; Kachel 1997). There are many studies in the literature that indicate a positive relationship between students' library use habits and their success at school (Vernon, 1973; Burns, 1977; British Columbia Library Association, 1990; Willett, 1995; Haycock, 1999a, 1999b; Lance, Rodney, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000). As the amount of research revealing the effect of libraries on student success at school increases, studies oriented towards the use of the library become more intensive. The studies regarding library use are usually focused on the extent to which students use the library (Yılmaz, 2004; Lederman, 1981); their attitude towards the library (Allen, 1970; Berry, 1970; Elliott, 1977; Drake, 1985); the respective characteristics of the individuals using and not using a library (Musavi, 1977; Drake, 1985); demographic characteristics affecting the use of the library (Burns, 1978; Walker, 1963; Mears, 1974; Bauner, 1978) and the effects of family, school and teachers on library use habits (Andrews, 1978; Bernal-Rosa, 1978). The results of the research carried out on school libraries show that participants usually go to libraries for study and to do their homework (Bolton, 1982; Lange, 1988; Burks, 1993; W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1996; Bancroft, Croft, Speth ve Phillips, 1998; Talbot, Lowell and Martin, 1998; Fasick, 1998; Barnard, 2000; Clabo, 2002).

There is a library in only a few of the primary schools in Turkey. In schools with a library, a librarian is rarely employed on a full-time basis. There aren't comprehensive school libraries outside of universities in Turkey. This blocks students from acquiring a library use habit at an early age. However, it is essential that reading and library habits must be acquired by students from an early stage. Student teachers attending faculties of education, and who are prospective teachers, are especially expected to have acquired reading habits and developed skills in effective library usage. However, the limited numbers of research studies in the domestic literature have revealed that students do not have a positive attitude towards library use (Bayram 2001; Bınarbaşı, 2006). Departing from these perspectives, the present study aims to identify the academic library use habits of the students attending the Gazi University Faculty of Vocational High School (GÜMEF).

Gazi University Library was established in 1982 in order to support education-teaching and the research activities of the university. Its new 11.000 square meter building was opened in 2004. It houses 251,543 publications in total, including 172,678 books and 66,523 journals as well as 12,342 and postgraduate theses in its Central Library. As of the education year 2006-2007, approximately 30,000 pieces of electronic journals, 30.000 electronic books and 41 separate databases were available through the library. Nearly 200 of the readers are now capable of accessing the online database via computers at the Central Library. Since there are only a few studies of the use of the Gazi University library, it was regarded as important to carry out such a study. Carrying out research on school libraries is important in two regards: Firstly, the students' efficient use of libraries supports their success at school. The second aspect is that only very few of the students currently use the library efficiently.

2. Method

The aim of this study is to investigate university students' school library use habits, from their own perspective. Moreover; other variables including the extent to which students use their school libraries, which particular resources are beneficial for them and whether or not their library use habit depends on their being a member of the class and library were examined.

2.1. Participants

Scanning model was used in the research. The participant sample was comprised of students attending the 1st and 4th grades in GÜMEF. The research sample also includes 406 students 205 being from the 1st grades while another 201 are from the 4th grades in the departments of Child Development and Education, Family Economics and Nutrition, Applied Arts, Handicrafts and the Clothing Industry and Fashion Designing Education, in the Gazi University Faculty of Vocational High School.

2.2. Instruments

A Likert type scale was developed by the researchers in order to identify participants' library use habits. The questionnaire is composed of two parts. The first part is designed to find out the frequency of the students' visiting the school library, the frequency of their borrowing books, the departments they use at the library, how long they stay in the library and who encouraged them to go to library.

In the second part, questions regarding students' library use habits are included. The questionnaire, after being revised on the basis of recommendations from experts, was applied to another group of students; this was comprised of 205 attending the 1st and the 4th grades in these departments, similar to the sample group. Demonstrative factor analysis was used in order to explore the existing factor structure of the 22-item scale formed as a result of these initial studies and thus to examine its structure validity. Within this context; firstly the eligibility of the data structure for factor analysis was studied by using the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) coefficient and Barlett test. KMO value for existing data structure was found .84. The chi-square value calculated from the Bartlett test was found to be significant, χ^2 (N=205, sd=136), $p < .01$. That KMO value is above .70 and the Bartlett test produced significant results shows that the factor analysis can be conducted (Büyüköztürk, 2007). In this analysis; .40 factor loading was taken as the criterion and items below that were excluded from the scale. Thus 5 items were removed from the scale and the other 17 were included in it. The scale produces only one strong factor with no rotation. Hence, one single factor explains 31.12 % of total variance. Factor loads of the items vary between .45 and .77. Internal consistency coefficient of the scale was identified by means of Cronbach Alpha and the Alpha value was found to be .81. The scale can be used as a valid and reliable instrument. The items regarding library use habit were scaled across five degrees (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). This scaling model was used for positive items in the scale while negative items, which are 3, 4, 7, 12 and 14, were scored in a reversed way.

In addition, five students were selected from the 1st and 4th classes of each department and group interviews were held. Students were asked whether they like the school library or not. Furthermore, the number of books they borrow from Gazi University Central Library per year was investigated. Then, responses to the questionnaire were analyzed and techniques such as percentage, frequency and t test analysis were used for analyzing data. The results of the interviews were used to better understand student library use habits and the habits were related to the literature.

3. Findings

Firstly, general information regarding student use of the school library was included, their library use habits were identified and then it was investigated whether such habits varied depending on student grade levels and whether or they were members of the library.

Table 1 – Findings regarding student library use

Findings	N	%
<i>Frequency of going to the library</i>		
Never	16	3.9
Every day	17	4.2
Every 2-3 days	48	11.8
Once a week	141	34.7
Once a month	119	29.3
When I need	65	16.0
<i>Frequency of borrowing books</i>		
Never	52	12.8
Every day	4	1.0
Every 2-3 days	7	1.7
Once a week	44	10.8
Once a month	53	13.1
Depending on the need for research	244	60.1
<i>Reasons for going to the library</i>		
For research	367	90.4
For a quiet environment for studying	192	47.3
For acquiring new knowledge	99	24.4
For preparing for exams	90	22.2

For spending spare time	49	12.1
For following up innovations in the area	40	9.9
For meeting friends	21	5.2
<i>Departments that are used most frequently in the library</i>		
Books	312	76.8
Studying rooms	136	33.5
Copying	132	32.5
Postgraduate thesis	102	25.1
Periodicals	73	18.0
On-line data scanning sites	57	14.0
<i>Duration of stay in the library</i>		
Less than 1 hour	46	11.3
1-2 hours	207	51.0
3-4 hours	122	30.0
More than 5 hours	27	6.7
<i>Encouragement for students going to the library</i>		
Friends	215	53.0
Their interest and willingness	150	36.9
Instructors' recommendation	29	7.1
During orientation activities held at faculty	9	2.2

The table above shows that 3.9 % of students do not go to the library at all and another 12.8 % do not borrow books from library at all. 34.7 % of the interviewed group goes to the library once a week, 29 % once a month while 10.8 % borrow a book once a week and 13.1 % once a month. 60.1 % of the participants state that the frequency of borrowing books varies depending on the need for research. According to the data gained from Gazi University Library, students attending the Vocational Education Faculty have borrowed 7533 books in total from the library between the years 2008-2009. The total number of students in the faculty is 3346 in the 2008-2009 education year. It reveals that 2.5 books per student are used.

As for the students' reasons for going to the library; it is found out that 90.0 % make use of the library for conducting research. Also, since libraries provide a quiet environment, they are preferred by students for gaining new knowledge, preparing for exams, spending free time and following up innovations in their respective areas. It can be seen that students most frequently use books, studying rooms, copying services and referring to postgraduate theses held at the library. Students' period of stay in the library also shows that 51.0 % stay for 1-2 hours and 30 % for 3-4 hours. 53.0 % of the participants reported that they are encouraged to go to library by their friends, 36.9 and 7.1 % of the students went to the library out of curiosity and upon their instructors' encouraging them, respectively.

Table 2 – Frequency and percentage of student library use habits (N=406)

Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		No opinion		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. I like spending time at the library.	20	4.9	59	14.5	199	49.0	39	9.6	89	21.9
2. I spend my free time at the library.	68	16.7	182	44.8	114	28.1	26	6.4	16	3.9
3. I feel irritated by being at the library.	176	43.3	172	42.4	39	9.6	4	1.0	15	3.7
4. I go to the library only when I have assignment.	40	9.9	149	36.7	122	30.0	31	7.6	64	15.8
5. I go to the library for studying.	38	9.4	116	28.6	170	41.9	34	8.4	48	11.8
6. I go to the library for doing research.	80	19.7	37	9.1	135	33.3	134	33.0	20	4.9
7. I regret over spending time at library.	265	65.3	113	27.8	17	4.2	5	1.2	6	1.5
8. The quiet, tidy and peaceful environment at the library is relaxing for me.	22	5.4	46	11.3	140	34.5	42	10.3	156	38.4
9. A student teacher must be a member of the library.	8	2.0	22	5.4	138	34.0	34	8.4	204	50.2
10. I can stay at the library for very long periods.	21	5.2	102	25.1	137	33.7	70	17.2	76	18.7
11. I cannot understand how time passes when I am at the library.	24	5.9	85	20.9	163	40.1	44	10.8	90	22.2
12. I feel bored at the library.	151	37.2	177	43.6	44	10.8	15	3.7	19	4.7
13. The library is a good place for studying.	16	3.9	57	14.0	143	35.2	47	11.6	143	35.2
14. I cannot study comfortably at every library.	45	11.1	110	27.1	171	42.1	25	6.2	55	13.5
15. The library is a good place for me to study in when it is tidy, clean and well illuminated.	6	1.5	39	9.6	146	36.0	42	10.3	173	42.6
16. I ask the librarian for help as needed.	30	7.4	188	46.3	131	32.3	36	8.9	21	5.2
17. I try to benefit from all facilities of the library.	10	2.5	83	20.4	187	46.1	56	13.8	70	17.2

The investigation in terms of positive items shows that half of the participants (49.0 %) agree at medium level about liking spending time at library, 31.0 % of the group likes spending time at the library, and another 19.4 % does not like according to the Table 2. Whereas the majority of the group likes being at the library; more than half of the participants (61.5 %) do not spend their spare time at the library. A small portion of the group (10.3 %) stated that they spend their spare time at the library. The participants expressed varying views during interviews also:

- I like being at library.
- The pleasing environment at the library motivates me to study.
- I like libraries but I do not want to be there in my spare time.
- I spend my spare time with friends instead of at the library.

Approximately half of the students (41.9 %) agree at a medium level with idea of going to the library for studying while only 38.0 % of the group also goes to the library for reasons other than studying. Whereas 37.9 % of the participants go to the library for carrying out research, 28.8 % do not prefer the library for conducting research. The participants also emphasized that they made use of libraries for study purposes during the interviews:

- I specifically prefer libraries for studying.
- Libraries are the most appropriate places for studying and carrying out research.

The majority of the students feel relaxed, thanks to the quiet and peaceful environment of the library and 16.7 % say that libraries do not have that effect for them. Some of the ideas suggested by the students during the interviews are as follows:

- The quiet and peaceful environment at library is optimizes conditions for studying.
- Quietness at library helps to lure you into reading books.

Almost all of the participants (92.6 %) are of the opinion that student teachers need to be members of the library. While 35.9 % of the participants say that they can stay for too long at the library, 33.7 % agree at medium level only and another 30.3 % disagrees with that idea. Similarly; 33.0 % of the participants do not realize how time passes at the library whereas 26.8 % think the opposite. The majority of the students (82.0 %) believe that libraries are good places for studying and again the majority of them (88.9 %) believe that libraries are good places for studying as they are clean and tidy. These results were echoed in the interviews:

- The inside of the library is quite nice, comfortable, clean and peaceful.
- There are a great number of resources regarding my discipline and the reading areas are wide and suitable for reading.
- The best library I have ever seen; it is perfectly decorated and ergonomic.

More than half of the participants (53.7 %) do not ask librarians for help; however 14.1 % ask. Interviews held with students showed varying views regarding librarians. While some of them find librarians very indifferent, some others regard the support provision as sufficient:

- The Librarians are so indifferent that I get no replies when I ask a question.
- I cannot find the books that I need; and the librarians are not helpful at all.
- The Library staff is helpful and capable of helping in all aspects.

Almost half of the students (46.1 %) who benefit from the library facilities are medium level while only 31.0 % benefit further. This is because, the students suggest:

- I cannot benefit from all of the library facilities because I don't know how to use them.
- The books are in a mixed order, I cannot scan via the computer so I cannot reach the books I need.
- There are only a few computers for scanning and they are broken.
- The catalogue system is so confusing that I cannot manage to find the papers, theses and books I need.

As for the investigation in terms of negative items; almost all of the participants (85.8 %) disagree with the idea of feeling irritated by being at library. Similarly; almost all of the participants (93.1 %) do not agree with the phrase "I regret over" spending time at the library". 80.8 % of the group states that they do not feel bored at the library. 46.6 % of the participants disagree with the item about going to the library only when homework is assigned. 38.2 % of the participants can study in only a particular type of library.

- Comparisons made in relation to grade levels and being a member of the library or not

According to the t test results carried out to distinguish if there are differences between library use habits of the students attending the 1st and 4th grades; 1st grade students' average points were found higher for items 1, 2, 6, 8, 9,13 and 15 while 4th grade students' average points were found higher for items 3 and 4; and there are significant differences between the groups. (positive items; t=2.374, p<.05, t=1.990, p<.05, t=3.444, p<.001, t=2.952, p<.01, t=2.421, p<.05, p<.01, t=4.078, t=3.733, p<.001, negative items; t=2.870, p<.01, t=2.636, p<.001)Hence; 1st grade

students' average point for the positive items is higher while 4th grade students' average point for the negative items is found to be higher.

Whether being a member of the library affects library use habits shows that the average points of those who are not members of the library (items 3, 4, 7, 12 and 14) are higher than those of members of the library. On the other hand, the average points of those who are members of the library (items 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16 and 17) were found to be significantly higher than those who are not members of the library. (positive items; $t=3.048$, $p<.01$, $t=3.115$, $p<.01$, $t=2.369$, $p<.05$, $t=2.374$, $p<.05$, $t=4.072$, $p<.001$, $t=2.845$, $p<.01$, $t=2.420$, $p<.05$, $t=2.893$, $p<.01$, $t=3.923$, $p<.001$, $t=3.754$, $p<.001$, negative items, $t=3.487$, $p<.001$, $t=2.927$, $p<.01$, $t=2.749$, $p<.01$, $t=2.157$, $p<.05$, $t=1.994$, $p<.05$).

4. Discussion

In this research, which is designed to identify students' habits in the use of their own school library, it was found that more than half of the students go to the library once a week or month, while only a few students go everyday and that there were even participants, though very few, who never go to the library. One of the oldest pieces of research regarding library use was carried out in 1933. This study showed that libraries were not used effectively and students usually went to libraries to read newspapers and journals (Cited by Clabo, 2002). The research carried out by Clabo in 6 high schools also revealed that (2002) 46.9 % of the students never go to library in a year, and another 22.3 % go to the library for once or twice. In other studies it was also found that only a few students go to the library on a regular basis while the remaining students do not need to do so and they spend very little time at library (Burks, 1993; Barnard, 2000).

As for the frequency of student book borrowing book, it is understood that the number of books varies according to the student's need for research. Of the participants, 12.8 %, which is a considerable portion of the whole, has never borrowed a book from the library. According to the results gained from Gazi University Library, students of the Faculty of Vocational Education have borrowed 7533 books in total from the library in a year. In this case, every student borrows 2.25 books per year. The American Library Association regards the reading of 1-5 books a year as a weak library habit (Cited by Yılmaz, 1995). Hence it can be said that the students' reading habit is weak.

The majority of the students make use of the libraries for research. Also students prefer libraries in relation to the gaining of new knowledge and preparing for examinations since they are quiet places. It was concluded from many studies that students use school libraries for doing their homework and assignment tasks (Bolton, 1982; Drake, 1985; Bancroft, Croft, Speth ve Phillips, 1998; Whitmire, 2001). The materials that are used most frequently by students include books, studying rooms, copying facilities and postgraduate theses, while those that are used the least are on-line resources and periodicals. Half of the participants stay in the library for 1-2 hours. Research carried out in Iowa University regarding university students' library use level showed that only a few of them use microfilm, CD-Rom and video (Clougherty et al. 1998). During the interviews the students suggested that they go to the library only for studying and reading, since they were unable to use the resources efficiently. The reason for their not being able to use the resources efficiently might be that they do not know how to do that. According to the research; students are encouraged to use the library mainly by their friends and their own curiosity. The impact of the instructors towards this end was found to be too low. As a matter of fact, the instructors' encouraging the students to go to the library, assigning homework that incentivizes and their own going to the library as a good model for students, affects students' attitude towards the library in a positive way (Baker, 1996; Burks 1997, Clabo, 2002).

It was found in this study that the students think that every student teacher must be a member of the library; they like spending time at the library; they usually go to the library for research, homework and assignments; they like the quiet and peaceful environment in the library and they prefer libraries to be clean and tidy. Also participants do not agree with the idea of "regret over" spending time in the library, being bored with the library and they do not want to spend their spare time in the library.

In line with the findings of this study, other research has demonstrated that students make use of the library for its quietness (Gratch, 1980; Lai, 1990), studying (Clabo, 2002; Talbot, Lowell ve Martin, 1998) and for acquiring new knowledge (Yu, 2006).

Students do not ask librarians for help much. In line with the results of this study, other studies also showed that librarians have a negative image for students and the latter do not ask them for help (Lederman, 1981; Drake,

1985; Harwood and Bydder, 1998; Kershaw, 2001). During interviews, students said that they did not ask librarians for help, mainly because the latter are not helpful and they are too straight-faced.

As for the investigation into whether or not the library use habit of the students varies according to whether they are members of the class and the library or not, it was found out that habits of the 1st grade students and those that are members of the library were found to be more positive. The comparisons made in terms of grade levels produced differing results in the literature. In some of the studies; students attending the first grade (Barkey, 1965) use the library more, while in some other studies, those attending the fourth grade (Andrews, 1978; Drake, 1985) use the library more. In this study; the reason for the last grade students' using the library less than the 1st grade students might be down to factors such as concern for the future, the existence of an examination in order to become a teacher and their preparing for the exam, their working on a part-time basis and the paucity of their spare time. Daniel's (1983) and Musavi's studies (1977), also recorded that the students with a positive attitude towards the library and that are members of the libraries use the libraries more.

5. Conclusion and Implications

To conclude, the student teachers involved in the present study mainly prefer libraries for carrying out research and for studying, instructors do not persuade students to use the library a lot, and the students do not ask for much help from the instructors. That students like spending time in the library, but avoid spending their spare time there, is another point of note. Moreover, students expect libraries to be quiet, clean, tidy, and peaceful. Libraries must be places where students feel themselves to be positive and happy if students are to use them more frequently. It is revealed that students mainly prefer to use books in libraries. In addition to their using libraries for studying and reading books, they need to use other materials such as CD-ROMs, microfiche, online resources and periodicals. The students must be given education, an appropriate bibliography and library use training towards this end.

The students do not ask librarians for help although they need it. The most important reason for this is that librarians are often cold and indifferent when asked for help. Librarians must be trained at regular intervals and seminars must be arranged on human relations and communication. The main people to lead students to use the library are listed as peers; they are also led there by their own curiosity. Instructors do not constitute an agent affecting and supporting the students in library use. The instructors should assign students studies, projects and homework that require library use and promote library use and award such work with prizes. Furthermore; cooperation between librarians and the instructors should be fostered. The student will develop positive feelings towards a library where s/he can access to the knowledge she or he needs. Libraries should arrange complaints procedures and self-assessment forms should be made use of. Complaints should be quickly dealt with and the necessary precautionary steps taken to prevent any further complaints. Furthermore, libraries should themselves carry out such research in order to identify user satisfaction levels. Finally; libraries must be places with clear catalogues and referencing systems and where a rich collection of books and other resources can be easily accessed, and where the copying services are of a high quality. The librarians should be smiling, helpful, informed, welcoming and friendly.

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