The development of the university's readers' culture

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Abstract

The act of reading affects people in individual and social life. The purpose of this research is the evaluation of student opinions to develop reader culture in universities. Research data were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Participants in this research included 60 students studying at various universities in Kazakhstan in the 2021-2022 academic year. It has been concluded that the reading habits of the university students participating in the research are at a moderate level, the students do not see themselves as highly qualified readers, and the reading habits of female students are relatively higher than male students. While the type of poetry is mostly preferred by female students, a small portion of male students stated that they read comics. Based on the research findings, it has emerged that universities should organize activities to increase students' reading culture.

Keywords: Reader culture; reading culture; reading habits; university students.

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1. Introduction

The act of reading affects people in individual and social life. Reading begins to make sense when teachers, academics, families, children, and students begin to internalize reading compared to other daily activities. On the other hand, although the effects of mass media are at the forefront, the messages of the texts read improve people in many ways. For this reason, it should be ensured that the act of reading is perceived as a way of life, not as a leisure activity (Small & Arnone, 2011).

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Reading skill is among the most basic skills that every individual should acquire. Considering the functions attributed to reading and the studies carried out on reading skills today, the concept of 'reading culture', as a concept that includes basic literacy skills, reading habits, and high-level skills in reading, emerges as a more comprehensive concept that meets the expected skills. From individuals who have acquired a culture of reading; in addition to the desire to read, it is expected that he will meet the world of written cultural products, reach the competence of sharing, testing, and questioning the messages of this world, and turn this into a lifestyle (Merga, & Mason, 2019).

Although the concepts of "reading habit" and "reading culture" are widely used in the literature, reading culture requires acquiring critical reading and writing skills, which is the upper step of reading habit. In other words, for the reading culture to become widespread in society, people should be able to transform their basic literacy skills into reading habits and critical reading skills. Ideally, individuals should interact with books starting from early childhood, acquire reading habits, and have a reading culture (Celik et al., 2017).

Reading culture, in the simplest way, can be defined as the transformation of the skills acquired by individuals regarding the act of reading into a way of life in society. To talk about a settled culture acquired in society, the subject of that culture must be removed from being an individual and gain the ability to represent at the social level (Yilmaz, 2009). Information exhibits a constantly changing and developing structure. Therefore, it is also important to be sustainable in reading books. As a necessity of the age, the habit of reading books should be gained especially to university students. In this context, students who have a reading culture will be successful in their profession after graduation, and this will affect the development level of the country (Karatas et al., 2015).

To create and develop a reading culture in a society, it is extremely important to move the reading environment at school to different living spaces, especially at home. Thus, the act of reading will cease to be only school-oriented. Restricting reading to textbooks and classrooms will negatively affect students' reading needs in different areas of daily life. For this reason, it should be emphasized that reading is an action that can be performed in all areas of daily life, without the limitation of space and time (Doiron & Asselin, 2011).

1.2. Related research

Reading habit, which is one of the indicators of individual and social development, is important at every stage of learning. University students are also included in the groups where reading habits are expected to be high (Gunduz, 2015). In a study conducted by Gomleksiz (2004) on university students, the researcher tried to determine whether there was a significant difference between the students' reading habits, their willingness to read a book, their views on the effect and benefit of reading, and

their gender. In the study, the attitudes of female students towards liking reading books were found to be more positive than male students.

In this study conducted by Gholipour (2012) to determine the reading level and characteristics of the students studying at the Department of Persian Language and Literature at Tabriz University (Iran), it was determined that the students were intermediate readers. As a result of the research, it has been revealed that the students mostly read for lectures and information purposes, and they mostly get the books from the university libraries.

As a result of the questions asked by Arıcı (2008) to university students, who were determined as those who do not like reading as a result of the survey conducted on reading, the students stated that "the reason for not reading is that they find some of the books boring and expensive, that they cannot gain this habit in childhood, that they do not have free time, that they do not read newspapers and magazines. They state that they do not have free time for TV, movies, and the Internet and that they find reading newspapers and magazines and TV, movies, and the Internet more enjoyable than reading books.

According to Hüseynova (2013), the works that people read, family, school, and environment have a great role in gaining reading habits. As a result of this study, which was carried out among students of Turkish origin who went to Turkey from independent Turkish states such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, it was revealed that Kazakhstani students mostly preferred works in the style of novels, stories and psychology, and they preferred works in the genre of poetry less.

In the study conducted by Odabaş et al. (2008) on the students of the Faculty of Science and Social Sciences, it was found that female students spend more time on reading than males. However, it has been stated that the students' work intensity and economic problems are the reasons that prevent them from reading. In addition, it was stated that students tend to read more in the last years of their education compared to their first years, but this rate is less than it should be for university students. Bamford and Day (2004) stated that students can read a large number of books or different types of texts in an environment that can develop lifelong reading habits with a comprehensive reading program, but that the reading habits of students can be improved in this way.

1.3. Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to evaluate student opinions to develop reader culture in universities. In this direction, answers are sought for the following sub-objectives.

1. How do university students evaluate the frequency of their reading habits?
2. How do university students evaluate the quality of their reading habits?
3. What are the types of books that university students prefer to read?
4. What are the opinions of university students about the practices that can be done in universities to improve the reading culture?

2. Materials and Methods

In this section, information about the research method, participant group, data collection tools, and data analysis are given. This research was designed following the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a method that inquires about the problem it examines, interprets, and tries to

understand the form of the problem in its natural environment (Klenke, 2016). In this direction, student opinions taken to develop reader culture in universities were evaluated with a qualitative method.

2.1. Participants

The participant group of the research was selected through an easily accessible sample. Convenience or convenience sampling relies entirely on what is available, quick, and easy to get to. It is the most frequently used but least desirable strategy in qualitative research. It is known that in most cases, researchers conducting qualitative research anticipate that the sample size they will use will not allow for generalization, and they prefer situations that are easy to access and inexpensive to work with, regardless of how they are selected (Vogt, et al., 2012). The participant group of the research consists of university students studying at various universities in Kazakhstan. Sixty (60) students who were university students in the 2021-2022 academic year and agreed to participate in the research voluntarily participated in the research. Students; 34 are girls and 26 are boys. 12 students are in the 1st Year, 7 students in the 2nd Year, 32 students in the 3rd Year, and 11 students in the 4th Year. In addition, 22 of the students are studying at the faculty of engineering, 19 at the faculty of science, 8 at the faculty of human and social sciences, and 11 at the faculty of economics and administrative sciences.

2.2. Data Collections Tools

Research data were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. While developing the data collection tools, the researchers were flexible as possible and focused on the details that would contribute to the solution of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Semi-structured interview forms contain specific and few questions; developing predetermined behavior charts for observations; It is important to prepare information bots that show which criteria should be handled and how for text and speech analysis (Eysenbach & Köhler, 2002). The semi-structured opinion form prepared in this direction is given in Table 1.

Table 1
 Semi-Structured Interview Form

Demographic Information
Your gender:
Department/Faculty where you studied:
Class You're Studying:
Questions About Reading Culture
1. How do you evaluate the frequency of your reading habit?
……… …….
2. How do you evaluate the quality of your reading habit?
……… ……
3. What kind of books do you prefer to read?
……… ………
4. What are your views on the practices that can be done in universities for the development of reading culture?
……… ……

In Table 1, a semi-structured interview form created by the researchers to get the opinions of the university students participating in the research is given. The interview form consists of two parts. In the first part, there are three questions about the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the research, and in the second part, there are three questions about the reading culture of the students.

2.3. Data Collections Process

In the data collection process of the research, primarily university students studying at universities in the 2021-2022 academic year were reached and informed about the content of the research. Semi-structured interview forms were sent via e-mail to 60 students who agreed to participate in the study voluntarily, and they were asked to fill in the interview forms and send them to the researchers. The phase of determining the volunteer participant group of the study, filling in the semi-structured interview forms, and sending them to the researchers took about 6 weeks.

2.4. Analysis of data

The content analysis method was used in the analysis of the research data. Content analysis requires a more detailed examination of the collected data and reaching the concepts, categories, and themes that explain this data. The content analysis focuses on collected data; Codes are extracted from the events and facts that are frequently repeated in the data set or that the participant emphasizes heavily. You can go to categories from codes and to themes from categories. In short, data (codes) that are found to be similar and related to each other are interpreted by bringing them together within the framework of certain concepts (categories) and themes. In content analysis, the content of participants' views is systematically separated (Bengtsson, 2016).

In content analysis, data obtained through interviews, observations, or documents are analyzed in four stages: (1) coding the data, (2) finding the codes, categories, and themes, (3) organizing the codes, categories and themes, and (4) defining and interpreting the findings. (Eysenbach and Köhler, 2002). The answers given by the university students to the semi-structured interview form were coded and categorized. These categories were then tabulated with frequency and percentage calculations. In addition, the answers given by the students are kept in each table with their identity information hidden, S1, S2, S3…. given in codes.

3. Results

In this section, the answers given by the university students participating in the research to the questions in the semi-structured interview form were evaluated.

The question "How do you evaluate the frequency of your reading habits?" is shown in Table 2. Their answers to the question were evaluated.

Table 2
Evaluations of the students about the frequency of reading habits

Themes	Participant Comments	Schoolgirls		Boy Students		Sum	
		F	%	F	%	F	%

I read books regularly	S9; I read books regularly. I follow the new books about the fields I am interested in.	7	20,5	3	11,5	10	16,7
	S19; I always try to finish a few books a month.						
	S36; I read books frequently. I believe that regular reading improves me in every way.						
Sometimes I read a book	S11; Whenever I have time, I try to read a book. I read as much as I can, though not all the time.	24	70,6	11	42,3	35	58,3
	S28; Sometimes I read books. However, I cannot say that it is a regular activity in my life.						
	S48; I occasionally read books. I know I need to read more, but unfortunately, I don't have much time to read.						
I rarely read	S2; Unfortunately, I don't read very often. I rarely read.	3	8,9	12	46,2	15	25
	S13; I rarely read books. Since I have not acquired such a habit, I am aware of its deficiency.						
	S53; I can only read a few books a year. I can't spare much time.						
Sum		34	100	26	100	60	100

In Table 2, the views of university students participating in the research on the frequency of their reading habits were evaluated. 16.7% of the students answered that I read books regularly, 58.3% of

them sometimes read books and 25% answered that I rarely read books. It was concluded that the frequency of reading books among female students participating in the study was higher than that of male students.

In Table 3, the university students participating in the research asked the question "How do you evaluate the quality of your reading habit?" Their answers to the question were evaluated.

Table 3

Evaluations of the students regarding the quality of their reading habits

Themes	Participant Comments	Schoolgirls		Boy Students		Sum	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
I am a qualified reader.	S9; I read books to improve myself in my field. I consider myself a skilled reader.	5	14,7	1	3,8	6	10
	S23; There are literary genres that I particularly enjoy reading. I think this makes me a qualified reader.						
	S57; I do a critical reading. I am critical both in my area of expertise and in the genres I enjoy reading.						
I'm not a very skilled reader	S19; There are a few authors that I particularly like, but I make random choices while reading more.	22	64,7	10	38,5	32	53,3
	S41; I usually make random choices. That's why I'm not a very qualified reader.						
	S53; I consider myself a partially qualified reader.						
I am an unqualified reader.	S3; I read very few books and I am not very picky.	7	20,6	15	57,7	22	36,7
	S42; I know that I need to read more often. Unfortunately, I describe myself as an unqualified reader.						
	S59; My reading culture is very poor. I hardly have such a habit.						
Sum		34	100	26	100	60	100

In Table 3, the opinions of the university students participating in the research on the quality of their reading habits were evaluated. 10% of the students answered that I am a qualified reader, 53.3% of them are not a very qualified reader and 36.7% of them answered that I am an unqualified reader. The rate of female students participating in the study evaluating themselves as qualified reader is higher than male students.

In Table 4, the question "What kind of books do you prefer to read?" Their answers to the question were evaluated.

Table 4

Students' opinions on the types of books they prefer to read

Themes	Participant Comments	Schoolgirls		Boy Students	
		F	%	F	%
Novel	S7: I like to read novels. My favorite kind of detective. I often read crime novels. S20: Actually, I read books of various genres, but I prefer novels the most. S57: My favorite books are horror novels. I also follow new releases.	25	73,5	12	46,5
Textbooks	S14: I mostly prefer books related to my courses. Other than that, I don't have much time to read. S30: I read the books about my lessons. I'm not very interested in different kinds of books. S41: I rarely read novels except for textbooks.	21	61,7	15	57,6
Poetry	S10: I like to read poetry books. Even though I don't read it very often, poetry books intrigue me. S48: I like poetry the most. There are some poets that I love. I read their poems.	17	50	5	19,2
Comic book	S40: I like to read comics. There are some cartoon characters that I particularly like. S42: I also like novels, but mostly I read comics.	-	-	3	11,5

In Table 4, the opinions of the students participating in the research about the types of books they prefer to read are evaluated. 73.5% of female students and 46.5% of male students are novel, 61.7% of female students and 57.6% of male students are textbooks, 50% of female students and 19% of male students .2% of the male students stated that they read poetry books and 11.5% of the male students stated that they read comic books. There are no female students who stated that they read comic books.

In Table 5, the university students who participated in the research asked the question "What are your views on the practices that can be done in universities to improve the reading culture?" Their answers to the question were evaluated.

Table 5

Opinions of the students on the practices that can be done in universities to develop the reading culture

Themes	Participant Comments	F	%
Organizing a Seminar/Conversation	*S10; Signature days of important authors can be organized at the university. Seminars are available.* *S16; It can be effective if there are conversations about increasing the reading culture and the benefits of reading.* *S27; I think it is very important for universities to organize activities to improve students' reading culture.*	49	81,6
Method Development Studies	*S15; Applications should be made to improve speed reading techniques.* *S49; Applications should be made to gain the habit of reading.* *S60; Hızlı etkili ve eleştirel okuma alışkanlığı edindirmeye yönelik sertifika programları düzenlenebilir S60; Certification programs can be organized for quick-acting and critical reading habits.*	33	55
Enriching libraries	*S5; I think it is very important to make university libraries richer in terms of content.* *S55; Libraries need to have a structure that includes not only course resources but also all kinds of literary works.*	16	26,6

Club Studies	*S58; It is very important that I can reach every book I am looking for from the library.* *S30; Club activities can be carried out to increase the reading culture.* *S34; There are clubs at the school, but I don't know if there is a club for creating a reading culture. Such a study would be useful* *S38; Reading activities should be organized on certain days and hours of the week by establishing clubs.*	7	11,6

In Table 5, the opinions of the university students participating in the research on the practices that can be done in universities to improve the reading culture are evaluated. 81.6% of the students stated that organizing seminar conversations, 55% method development studies, 26.6% enriching libraries, and 11.6% club activities are practices that can be done in universities for the development of reading culture.

4. Discussions

The findings obtained from the research reveal that the reading habits of the students are at a moderate level and that the reading habits of female students are relatively higher than that of male students. The opinions of the students participating in the research on the quality of their reading habits are; that they are not very qualified readers. In his research titled "The Evaluation of Future Teachers' Views on Reading", Gomleksiz (2004) tried to determine the reading habits of university students and their views and attitudes towards reading.

As a result of the research, it was determined that female students like to read books more than male students, their reading habits and their desire to read books are higher. Skenderi and Ejupi (2017) evaluated the reading habits of university students in Macedonia in their study. As a result of the research, it was stated that the reading habits of the students were at a moderate level and that social media and intensive school programs were the factors affecting the reading habits of the students. In the study conducted by Alsaeedi et al. (2021), it was concluded that university students' reading habits were low. Many studies concluded that female students are more willing to read books than male students and that they read books at a higher rate (Hopper, 2005).

The students participating in the research stated that they mostly read novels, textbooks, poetry, and comics. The most read type of book among university students participating in the research is novel. Alan (2020) in his study on the book reading profiles of university students revealed that university students prefer to read novels more. The opinions of the students participating in the

research on the practices that can be done in universities to develop the reading culture; seminar conversations, method development studies, enrichment of libraries, and club activities. Altunbay and Üstün (2020) concluded that there is an important relationship between students' reading culture and library use in their study named "A research on library and library use as an indicator of reading culture". Süzer (2000) stated in his study that universities should give importance to leisure activities that will contribute to the development of young people's intellectual aspects as much as they give importance to the careers of students in terms of profession. In this regard, it should be ensured that various hobby clubs are formed within the university, and efforts should be made to provide facilities, equipment, and buildings where young people can perform their leisure activities.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of education; To help students grow up as individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and thoughts that will help them to better perceive and understand the cultural values of the society they live in and the global world. One of the important criteria of being a modern and developed society is that societies have individuals with reading habits. University students are also expected to be individuals with a high reading habits and a culture of reading. In this direction, students' opinions were evaluated to develop reader culture in universities.

It has been concluded that the reading habits of the university students participating in the research are at a moderate level, the students do not see themselves as highly qualified readers, and the reading habits of female students are relatively higher than male students. The books that university students prefer to read are mostly novels and textbooks. While the type of poetry is mostly preferred by female students, a small portion of male students stated that they read comics. In addition, the opinions of the students participating in the research on the practices that can be done in universities to develop the reading culture; seminar conversations, method development studies, enrichment of libraries, and club activities.

6. Recommendations

In line with the results obtained from the research, the following recommendations were developed.

1. Interviews with authors should be organized at universities to develop the reading culture of university students. In these interviews, the books of the authors should be introduced, and content should be created to increase the reading motivation of the students.

2. Courses, seminars, and conversations on reading techniques should be organized in universities. Students should be provided with the habit of speed reading.

3. It should be ensured that university libraries are equipped with rich content where students can access every book they are looking for so that students can easily access publications other than textbooks.

4. Clubs should be established to support and expand reading activities in universities, and these clubs should work on increasing the reading culture of students by organizing reading activities.

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