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## The views of students on the documentaries that they watched in history of science classes

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### Abstract

Some of the most effective and significant visuals that may be used in classes are documentary films. In this study which aimed to determine the views of students on the documentaries they watched in history of science classes, the responses of the students to the questions they were asked were examined, and frequency and percentage values were found. Considering the findings that were obtained, it may be stated that the students found the documentaries interesting and educational. However, it was also seen that a significant part of the group of students found them boring. Based on this finding, it may be stated that students prefer watching daily visuals that do not require much thinking rather than informative visuals.

*Keywords:* Documentaries, history of science, view of student

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## 1. Introduction

Some of the most interesting visual sources that may be used in classes are undeniably documentaries. The term 'documentary' which comes from French was used for the first time in 1926 to usually describe travel films (Katz, 1994). Documentary films, which allow discussion of the change caused by time with realistic data and comparative effects, are a significant source of information and experience for new generations (Cereci, 2011). Documentation that is needed for science, aesthetics that is needed for arts and editing that is needed for film are elements that are gathered and integrated by documentary film. Beyond being merely a genre that feeds on documents, documentary films are productions that inquire from scientific foundations, promote inquiry and project that responses of such inquiry will contribute to humanity (Nichols, 2001). Educational documentaries are usually those that are prepared to be used at schools and in the industry (Rilla, 1974). With the help of these documentaries to be used in classes, students will gain information on several events, topics and people they would not be able to find in their books or hear from their teachers, and they will have the opportunity to assess situations from a different point of view (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009). Documentaries, which are effective in terms of visualizing history and transferring information related to history to the society (Çaplı, 2002), have an important role in increasing the academic success of students and developing a conscious awareness in them (Bektaş-Öztaşkın, 2013). Documentaries also have an effective role in developing the high-level thinking skills of individuals such as synthesis, analysis and assessment (Yazıcı, 2008).

Educational documentaries, which are frequently used in especially history classes, are also a significant source for history of science classes. Considering that students are directed to comprehend what is science, how scientific knowledge emerges, how it changes and how the society is affected by this process (Mısır ve Laçın Şimşek, 2018), the significance of documentaries may be understood more clearly. Based on this significance, this study used educational documentaries in history of science classes, and it aimed to determine the views of students on these documentaries. For this purpose, answers were sought for the following questions;

- What are the views of students of the department of psychological counseling and guidance who take the course on history of science on the qualities of educational documentaries that are used in classes?
- What are the views of students of the department of psychological counseling and guidance who take the course on history of science on the duration and watching frequency of educational documentaries that are used in classes?
- What is the catchiest one among educational documentaries that are used in classes according to students of the department of psychological counseling and guidance who take the course on history of science?

## 2. Method

The study was carried out in the academic year of 2018-2019 with a total of 61 students of the Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance including 45 women and 16 men in their 2nd year of study who took the course on History of Science. Within the scope of this course, some educational documentaries were shown to the students, and their views were collected at the end of the course. A questionnaire that was developed by the researcher was utilized to determine the participants' views. Expert opinion was used for the content validity of the questionnaire.

### 2.1. Data collection

The data collection process was completed in a total of 10 weeks. 19 documentaries in total about the topics that were discussed in the context of the class were watched, and the opinions of the participants were collected in writing at the end of the class. The documentaries that were watched in the scope of the study and their durations are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. The documentaries that were watched in the scope of the study and durations.**

Number	Name of Documentary	Time (minute)
1. Documentary	Science in Ancient Greek	19
2. Documentary	Plato	8
3. Documentary	Archimedes	5
4. Documentary	Eratosthenes	6
5. Documentary	Pompeii	7
6. Documentary	Aristoteles	8
7. Documentary	Batlamyus	6
8. Documentary	Plato & Aristo	11
9. Documentary	Science in Medieval Age	13
10. Documentary	Who is Harezmi?	3
11. Documentary	Who is İbn-i Heysem	7
12. Documentary	İbn-i Sina	10
13. Documentary	Omer Hayyam	5
14. Documentary	Isaac Newton	5
15. Documentary	Who is Johannes Kepler?	3
16. Documentary	Galileo Galilei	5
17. Documentary	Antoine Lavosier	13
18. Documentary	Blaise Pascal	5
19. Documentary	Rene Descartes	3

### 2.2. Analysis of data

For the analysis of the data, the responses to the questionnaire that was applied with the participants were separately analyzed for each question, and frequency and percentage values were calculated.

### 3. Findings

In order to be able to find an answer to the first research question of the study, the responses given by the participants to the first question were examined, and the findings that may be seen in Table 2 were reached.

**Table 2. The views the participants about the nature of documentaries.**

Nature of the Documentaries	<i>f</i>	%
Educational and catchy	33	54.09
Entertaining	14	22.95
Interesting	7	11.47
Boring	7	11.47

The findings that were reached showed that more than half of the students (54.09%) found the documentaries to be educational and catchy. While 22.95% of the students described the

documentaries they watched as entertaining, 11.47% found them interesting. Again, 11.47% found the documentaries boring.

The second research question of the study aimed to determine the opinions of the participants on the duration and watching frequency of the documentaries. The views the participants provided regarding this issue are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. The views the participants about the durations of documentaries.**

Durations of Documentary	<i>f</i>	%
Sufficient	36	59.01
Should be shorter	23	37.70
Should be longer	2	3,29

Again, the findings that were obtained as a result of the question that was asked to the students about the watching frequency of the documentaries for the purpose of finding an answer to the second research question may be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4. The views the participants about the watching frequencies of documentaries.**

Waching Frequency of Documentary	<i>f</i>	%
Sufficient	36	59.01
Should be more frequent	22	36.05
Should be more less	3	4.91

The values that are shown in Tables 3 and 4 show that more than half of the students (59.01%) found the durations and watching frequencies of the documentaries sufficient. While 37.70% of the students wanted them to be shorter, almost the same ratio of them (36.05%) had the opinion that watching them more frequently would be better. Only two students wanted the documentaries to be longer, whereas three had the opinion that they should watch them less frequently.

In the study, it was finally aimed to determine which documentary was the catchiest for the students. The findings on the responses to this question are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. What documentary are the most permanent in memory.**

Most permanent in memory	<i>f</i>	%
Medieval Age	20	32.78
Eratosthenes	20	32.78
Science in Ancient Greek	12	19.67
Pompeii	4	6.56
"Who is ....?" Documentaries	3	4.92
Newton	2	3.28

The findings shown in Table 5 show that the documentaries that were found to be the most permanent in memory were those that were about the medieval age (32.78%) and the discoveries of Eratosthenes (32.78%). The documentary which discusses some philosophers in Ancient Greece was found to be catchy by 19.67% of the students.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

More than half of the students agreed that watching documentaries increases permanence of subjects in memory and is educational. It is highly interesting that there were as many students who found the documentaries entertaining as those who found them boring. Studies have shown that individuals spend an average of 2 hours and 32 minutes of their day on social media (Çayırılı, 2017). Considering that the participants of this study were young people at the ages of 19 to 21, it may be clearly stated that they spent much more time on social media. Despite this, it is very striking that, although they watched very short documentaries, they found them boring. This result shows that students may find informative documentaries boring even though they are very short, while they may allocate much more time for visuals with simple contents that do not exhaust their minds. The study also reached other findings that supported this result. Considering the views on the durations of the documentaries that were watched, while more than half of the students found these durations to be sufficient, almost the same number of them thought they need to be shorter. This shows that they found even documentaries that were 7-8-minute-long too long and boring. In addition to this, the vast majority of the students found their frequency of watching documentaries sufficient. This finding may be interpreted as that watching documentaries is more preferable in comparison to verbal lecturing in classes.

The documentary with the highest rate of remembrance by the students was the medieval age documentary titled "1001 Inventions and the Library of Secrets" where the leading character Al-Jazari was played by the Oscar-winning actor Sir Ben Kingsley. This documentary which was produced by Andrew Hardwick discussed the contributions of medieval Islamic scholars on the development of modern science and technology, and in this context, it was emphasized that the medieval age was not a dark age as it is popularly known. It was highly interesting that this documentary that has a very catchy and effective narrative was remembered by such a low number of students. Another documentary that was found to be as interesting as the documentary 1001 Inventions and the Library of Secrets was about the works of Eratosthenes on the shape of the Earth. The most important reason for the students to have found this documentary interesting may be the fact that an 800-km distance was measured by walking in the 200s BCE, and the circumference of the Earth was calculated as a value (40,000 km) that is very close to what is known today (40,800 km).

The results of the study showed that the students usually liked the documentaries and found the durations and watching frequencies of them adequate. However, considering in addition to this that some students found the documentaries boring and thought they should be shorter and less frequently watched, it may be stated that the students, who were accustomed to daily visuals that do not discuss significant topics, found it difficult to focus on informative documentaries. For this reason, it may be argued that utilizing documentaries as much as allowed by the topics in different classes is important and necessary.

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