

The Relationship between Preschool Teacher's Attitudes toward Children's Literature and Their Attitudes toward Reading Books

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During the preschool period, children's interest in reading increases, and their attitudes toward books develop with the means and opportunities provided by their teachers. Teachers' attitudes develop during their undergraduate education as pre-service teachers. This study aims to reveal preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits and the relationship between these attitudes. The relational screening model was used, and the study was conducted with 343 preschool pre-service teachers. The data were collected through the "Pre-service Teacher's Attitude toward Children's Literature Scale (ACLS)" and "Pre-service Teacher's Attitudes toward Reading Habit Scale (ARHS)." The descriptive, difference and correlation analyses were used to analyze the collected data. As a result of the study, the attitudes of preschool pre-service teachers toward children's literature were found to be high, and their attitudes toward reading habits were moderate. Regarding the differences in the attitudes according to the variables, the following results were obtained: female pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits were significantly higher than males; attitudes of 4th-grade pre-service teachers toward children's literature were significantly higher than others; regarding the attitudes toward reading habits, the only significant difference is in the "attitude toward the development of reading habit" sub-dimension, in favor of 1st-grade pre-service teachers; attitudes toward children's literature showed a statistically significant difference in favor of pre-service teachers who took children's literature course, but taking this course did not affect their attitudes toward reading habits. A positive and weak relationship was found between preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits.

Keywords: pre-school, pre-service teacher, children's literature, reading habit, attitude

INTRODUCTION

Book is one of the inseparable parts of human life; they allow an individual to develop in many aspects. The experiences granted by the books from the first years of life are essential for children's personality development and social and academic success. The preschool period is the period in which interest and attitude toward reading are shaped (Çakmak & Yılmaz, 2009). Children naturally enjoy books, and those who regularly interact with books discover their interests, and in the future, they prefer works that encourage them to read (Gönen & Veziroğlu, 2015). Children shape their attitudes by modeling their teachers; thus, teachers play a crucial role in children's developing a positive

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attitude toward reading and liking books. In this study, the attitudes of 343 pre-service teachers from undergraduate preschool teaching programs of three universities in Turkey toward children's literature and reading habits were examined. The study results provided insights into teachers' attitudes and their relationships. The results will increase pre-service teachers' awareness about reading books and children's literature and contribute to the development of preschool pre-service teachers' attitude in Turkey

Children's literature and Children's Literature Teaching

The concept of children's literature is defined as "works of superior art, which are suitable for the child's level of understanding and comprehension, and include oral and written products appealing to children's feelings and thoughts" (Oğuzkan, 2013; Şimşek, 2015). The most important feature of children's literature is being child-centered. Şirin (2016) explained this by introducing the concepts of "relevance to the child" and "child reality" in children's literature. Accordingly, the works written for children should meet the interests and needs of the child in terms of design and content and be suitable for the child (Çer, 2019). We can only talk about proper children's literature. It seems possible to contribute to all developmental areas of the child through literary works written from the child's point of view and promoting with children in mind. Children will make significant gains in different development areas through suitable literary works, such as imagination, creativity, social behaviors, problem-solving, listening and criticism, visual perception, fine motor skills, and thinking skills. In addition, the objectives and functions of children's literature include giving the child a love of books, making the child grow as a reader, acquiring a reading culture, and merging art and education. Children's literature products are works that combine enjoyment with learning. In this sense, positive experiences with children's literature in the early years can contribute to the child's enjoyment of books throughout life (Gönen & Veziroğlu, 2015, Şirin, 2016).

Children encounter books, become interested in books, and gain a love of books in the preschool period. Further, they acquire their first literacy experience at a very early age by observing and interacting with literate people around them (Kumaş, 2021). The gains of this period are the first step in forming a reading culture (Bulut, Kuşdemir, & Uzun, 2020). Reading culture is the reflection of the individual's critical literacy skills in social life. It is closely associated with the child's interaction with children's books in the early years (Samur İnce, 2014).

The book is fascinating for a child, regardless of age. Especially in the preschool period, the child's relationship with the book is mutable because development is very rapid in these years. However, different sources besides books can also be used to benefit better from children's literature. It can be said that the more diverse the materials used as a tool, the greater the child's interest in reading. It is necessary to use every genre encompassed under the concept of literature. The scope of literature also differs according to the interests and needs of children. The children's literature experiences acquired at an early age have a positive effect on the future of children. Fairy tales, fable-like stories, stories, poems, and riddles are the types of children's literature that can fulfill the different interests and needs of preschool children (Aytaş, 2003, Tür & Turla, 1999).

Encountering suitable and different literary works makes significant contributions to the child. For this, families and teachers, who determine the child's education, should select and use the works of children's literature suitable for their children's age and fit the developmental characteristics in early childhood years (Tür & Turla, 1999). In particular, preschool teachers should be well-trained in children's literature to provide adequate guidance to children and their parents. With the change in the Turkish Preschool Education undergraduate program in 2018, the name of the course "Children's Literature" was changed to "Early Childhood Literature." It is now taught in the 6th semester and takes two theoretical course hours per week. The content of this course includes: *"The development of children's literature in the world and Turkey, the importance of meeting with suitable books in*

childhood, and the function of children's literature in raising thoughtful and sensitive individuals who have acquired a reading culture, examination of the features (design, content and educational) that should be in children's literature with examples, showing unsuitable children's books with examples and discussing their negative effects on children's developmental characteristics, activities for determining the suitability of the books that pre-service teachers read and examine for children regarding their age groups and how they will contribute to children's development, determining the contribution of various literary genres (epic, fairy tale, poem, story, novel, etc.) and linguistic tools (numbers, rhymes, riddles, etc.) that appeal to children to children's development." (<https://www.yok.gov.tr/>).

This course on children's literature, whose importance is indisputable in raising the next generation, is limited to two hours per week in the preschool teaching program, which is insufficient. As Karakuş (2014) stated, the course content can be theoretically and practically enriched. The primary purpose of the children's literature course is to train teachers who comprehend the importance and necessity of children's literature and have the awareness to raise children who; are contribute to their community, adopt aesthetic values, use the language correctly and beautifully, read fondly, and have acquired a reading habit (Karakuş, 2014). In this context, extending the content and time of the Children's Literature course will allow the practice of it; thus, pre-service teachers will be able to deal with literary works using a holistic approach and comprehend them better (Kanat Soysal, 2020).

Attitude toward children's literature

Tezbaşaran (2008:2) defines attitude as "the tendency to react positively or negatively to any event, situation, object, concept, person, institution and organization." Attitudes are long-term traits and include cognitive, affective, and behavioral units. Some temporary dispositions should not be considered attitudes. In addition, attitude is not only a thought or emotion but also a multidimensional and progressive socio-psychological structure that includes cognitive, emotional, and observable activities that express themselves as belief (Bölükbaş, 2004). As it can be understood from the definitions of attitude, it is a psychological factor that significantly shapes people's behavior. Therefore, it is one of the psychological variables that should be measured. As it is known, children's literature products enable the child to acquire the habit of conscious reading. Teachers who believe in the importance of children's literature and have a positive attitude toward children's literature will be more sensitive about introducing suitable books to children starting from an early period. Moreover, teachers with positive attitudes will create a rich and interactive learning environment by using children's literature products in the education process (Karagül, 2020). Even if pre-service teachers are successful and knowledgeable in children's literature, they will not be able to convey what they know to children sufficiently if their attitude toward this field is negative (Sönmez et al., 2021). Considering the importance of the interest in children's literature and willingness to use the means provided by children's literature in education, the attitudes of preschool pre-service teachers have been set as one of the subjects of this study.

Reading Habits

A reading habit is formed by repeating the act of reading until reading becomes a part of that individual's daily life. Although reading is seen as an individual activity, it has social and cultural aspects. Readings habits acquired through individual efforts give important clues regarding the development level of society and its openness to change (Çintaş Yıldız, Ceran, & Sevmez, 2015; Eppard, Baroudi & Rochdi, 2020). From this point of view, it can be said that reading habit is not just a habit but a lifestyle. Maintaining the reading habit requires continuous action, a critical comprehension of what is read, and a qualified reading process (Altunkaya & Doğan, 2018). While reading involves spending one's free time and having fun, it is also indispensable for an acquisition that is integral for lifelong self-development, education, and self-knowledge. Reading behavior

starting at an early age and continuing throughout life is the first step in acquiring knowledge. Turning this behavior into a habit provides the individual with creative and critical thinking skills (Eroğlu, 2016). Thus, it turns into an act of reading that includes criticizing and thinking. Reading habit is a concept of the reading culture. Listening habits, literacy skills, reading habits, critical literacy, and universal literacy skills should be acquired to form the reading culture. Acquiring all these skills starts with the child's interaction with proper children's literature from early childhood (Fırat & Coşkun, 2017, Samur İnce, 2017).

A report by the Children's Foundation (2006) presented Turkey's reading habits. According to this report, childhood, youth, and adulthood periods are crucial in acquiring reading habits. Family, school, and environment are three critical social institutions affecting reading habits. The oral culture tradition, mentality, social, cultural, educational, and economic (poverty) factors, time and the current era, and media-centered (primarily related to television) affect the reading habit. Regarding the results of the Turkey Reading Culture Survey published in 2019, Turkish society has a developing relationship with the reading culture. However, it is not at a sufficient level compared to the European average. The same report underlined the importance of family support in developing reading habits and the necessity of continuing to support children and young people.

Yılmaz (2006) determined that the reading habits of the pre-service teachers studying in the classroom teaching were insufficient. Odabaş, Odabaş & Polat (2008) stated that higher education students do not have good reading habits. Yılmaz, Köse & Korkut (2009) revealed that Hacettepe and Bilkent University students have poor reading habits. Çintaş Yıldız, Ceran, & Sevmez (2015) found that pre-service teachers' reading habits are not sufficient. Arı & Demir (2013) determined that most pre-service teachers' reading habits are weak. The literature review has revealed many studies on determining pre-service teachers' reading awareness, interest in reading, reading consciousness, reading habits, and reading cultures (Akbaba, 2017, Arı & Demir, 2013, Arslan, Çelik & Çelik, 2009, Batur & Bek, 2010, Erkan Dağal & Tezcan, 2015, Fırat & Coşkun, 2017, Yalman & Özkan, 2013). Primary participants of these studies were language, classroom, preschool, pre-service teachers, or university students. In addition, there are studies on the reading habits of preschool teachers in the literature. Ilgar, Ilgar & Topaç (2015) determined that most preschool pre-service teachers have regular reading habits. Erdağı Toksun (2019) reported that preschool pre-service teachers' reading habits were moderate and that they acquired this habit during primary school. Ulutaş (2019) examined the relationship between preschool pre-service teachers' reading habits and online learning. Biçer and Ercan (2016) reported that preschool pre-service teachers' reading habits were moderate.

The following are studies in the field literature investigating preschool pre-service teachers' expectations, opinions, and competencies regarding the children's literature course and their competence in choosing children's books (Ayrancı & Aytaş, 2017, Ergün, 2011, Samur İnce, 2017, Turan, Gönen & Aydos, 2017, Ulutaş & Kıymaz, 2019, Ulusoy & Altun, 2018). However, the number of these studies is limited. Only the study by Altun (2018) focused on the relationship between preschool pre-service teachers' reading habits and their ability to choose suitable picture storybooks. Apart from this, no study examined the relationship between preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading habits and children's literature. This study examines the relationship between these two attitudes according to some variables, namely gender, grade, and taking a course on children's literature. It is thought that it will shed light on studies related to the quality of children's literature courses, preschool pre-service teachers' reading habits, and future scientific research on this subject and will contribute to the field in this respect.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the relationship between preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits. For this purpose, the following questions were addressed:

Regarding preschool pre-service teachers,

1. Are there differences in their children's literature attitude scores? (according to gender, grade, taking children's literature course)
2. Are there any differences in their reading habit attitude scores? (according to gender, grade, taking children's literature course)
3. Is there a relationship between their attitudes toward children's literature and their attitudes and sub-dimensions toward reading habits?

METHOD

Study Design

This study was designed using the relational screening model, which aims to examine the relationship between two or more variables without intervention (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). The study examined the relationship between the attitudes of pre-service teachers studying in the preschool teaching undergraduate program of three universities in Turkey toward children's literature and their attitudes toward reading habits without any intervention.

Setting and Participants

The study was carried out with undergraduate students of preschool teaching at three universities in three different cities in Turkey. Convenience sampling, one of the non-random sampling methods, was used to determine the study's sample. Convenience sampling creates the most accessible sample until the number of people that represent the universe is reached (Büyüköztürk, 2020). This method has been chosen to save time, money, and labor. The sample consists of 343 pre-service teachers attending 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades of the Preschool Education Programs of the Education Faculty at Eskisehir Osmangazi, Kirikkale, and Usak Universities in the 2021-2022 academic year. Pre-service teachers have participated in the research voluntarily. Demographic characteristics are given in the table below.

Table 1

Demographic information of participants

Variable	Categories	<i>f</i>	%
University	Eskisehir Osmangazi University	120	35.0%
	Kirikkale University	95	27.7%
	Usak University	128	37.3%
Grade	1 st Grade	39	11.4%
	2 nd Grade	136	39.8%
	3 rd Grade	95	27.8%
	4 th Grade	72	21.1%
Gender	Female	285	83.1%
	Male	58	16.9%
Taking the Children's Literature course	Yes	168	49.0%
	No	175	51.0%

Table 1 shows that the participants of the study were from Eskisehir Osmangazi (35%), Kirikkale (27.7%), and Usak (37.3%) universities; most of them were second-year students (39.8%), female (83.1%). The number of participants who took the children's literature course (49%) and those who did not (51%) was almost equal.

Data Collection

Preschool pre-service teachers were informed about the scales used before data collection. The scales were then shared with the pre-service teachers via Google Forms, and the participants were asked to fill them in. Pre-service teachers' consent for voluntary participation was taken, and the scales were filled out on 20 March-20 May 2022.

Data Collection Tools

The data in the research were obtained through the Personal Information Form, Pre-service Teacher's Attitude toward Children's Literature Scale (ACLS), and Pre-service Teacher's Attitudes toward Reading Habit Scale (ARHS).

The Personal Information Form consists of three questions about the university, gender, grade, and whether they have taken the children's literature course or not.

Pre-service Teacher's Attitude toward Children's Literature Scale (ACLS)

The scale was developed by Karagül (2020) to measure pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature. The Cronbach's Alpha value, the reliability coefficient, was calculated as 0.88. The scale consists of three sub-dimensions: "acceptance," "awareness," and "valuing(value)"; Cronbach's Alpha of the sub-dimensions are 0.85, 0.83, and 0.75, respectively. There are 26 items on the scale, scored using a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Indifferent, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The acceptance sub-dimension has 8 items, awareness has 12 items, and valuing has 6 items.

In this study, the Cronbach Alpha value of the whole scale was 0.87, while it was 0.70, 0.75, and 0.82 for acceptance, valuing, and awareness sub-dimensions, respectively. Reliability analysis indicated a high level of reliability in the whole and sub-dimensions. In this direction, it can be concluded that the data obtained through ACLS is reliable.

Pre-service Teacher's Attitudes toward Reading Habit Scale (ARHS)

The scale was developed by Susar Kırmızı (2012) to measure pre-service teachers' reading habits. 34 items on the scale are scored using a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Indifferent, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). There are three sub-dimensions in the scale. The "Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun" sub-dimension has 22 items, the "Attitudes about the meaning and indispensability of reading habit" sub-dimension has 8 items, and the "Attitudes toward the development of reading habits" sub-dimension has 4 items. The factor loads of the scale items vary between 0.54 and 0.80. The Cronbach's Alpha value, which is the reliability coefficient of the scale, was 0.95. The highest score on the scale is 170, and the lowest is 34.

In this study, Cronbach's Alpha value of the whole scale was 0.73. Regarding sub-dimensions, it was 0.71 for the "Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun," 0.69 for the "Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit," and 0.61 for the "Attitudes toward the development of reading habits." As a result of the reliability analysis, it can be said that the data obtained through ARHS is reliable.

Data Analysis

The research data were collected through Google Forms, prepared online, transferred to Microsoft Excel, and arranged. The data were then loaded to SPSS for analysis. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated to be 0.87 and 0.73 for ACLS and ARHS, respectively. It can be concluded that the reliability of the scales is high. The data distribution was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and the data were not normally distributed. In data analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated

first and shown as frequency, percentage, and median. Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U tests were used to compare the variables. Correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the relationships between pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits. The significance level was taken as $p < .05$ in the analysis.

FINDINGS

The analysis results include the descriptive statistics of ACLS and ARHS; the differentiation of ACLS and ARHS scores (tested by the Mann-Whitney U test for gender and taking children's literature course, and by the Kruskal-Wallis test for grade), correlation analysis results of the relationship between pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits. They are given below in Tables.

Descriptive statistics

To determine preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits, descriptive statistics were calculated. The results are given in Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics

	Min.	Max.	X	S _x	Item Average	p.
Acceptance	20	40	34.26	3.97	4.28	<.001
Awareness	31	60	52.51	5.05	4.38	<.001
Valuing	16	30	24.57	3.38	4.10	<.001
ACLS	77	130	111.33	10.20	4.28	<.001
Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun	44	106	81.48	8.37	3.704	.003
Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit	16	40	31.72	4.44	3.96	<.001
Attitudes toward the development of reading habits	4	17	7.10	2.44	1.8	<.001
ARHS	76	150	120.30	10.64	3.53	<.001
N	343					

*Normality Test: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, H₀: Data do not fit Normal Distribution. * $p < 0.05$*

Table 2 shows the general descriptive statistics of the scales. According to it, the mean ACLS score was 111.33 (± 10.20), and the mean ARHS score was 120.30 (± 10.64). ACLS scores ranged from 77 to 130, and ARHS scores from 76 to 150. The item averages were calculated by dividing the mean score by the number of items in the scales/sub-dimensions. Tekin (2002, 95-96) stated that on a 5-point scale, scores between 1.0-2.3 were considered low, 2.3-3.7 moderate, and 3.7-5.0 high. Accordingly, it can be said that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature are high, and their attitudes toward reading habits are moderate (3.53). Regarding the sub-dimensions of ACLS, the scores of all sub-dimensions are high, and the highest average is in the awareness dimension (4.38). Regarding the sub-dimensions of ARHS, the "Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit" sub-dimension has the highest score (3.96), and the score of the "Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun" sub-dimension is also high (3.70). However, the "Attitudes toward the development of reading habits" are low. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, performed to check the normality, shows that the data were not normally distributed with 95% confidence ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, non-parametric methods were used in the analysis.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine whether pre-service teachers' attitudes differed significantly according to gender.

Table 3
Mann-Whitney U test results according to the gender

	Gender	N	X	S _x	p
Acceptance	Female	285	34.54	3.80	0.007*
	Male	58	32.88	4.50	
Awareness	Female	285	52.84	4.83	0.019*
	Male	58	50.90	5.78	
Valuing	Female	285	24.86	3.28	<0.001
	Male	58	23.10	3.52	
ACLS	Female	285	112.24	9.81	<0.001
	Male	58	106.88	10.95	
Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun	Female	285	82.02	7.92	0.011*
	Male	58	78.79	9.93	
Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit	Female	285	32.11	4.29	0.001*
	Male	58	29.79	4.70	
Attitudes toward the development of reading habits	Female	285	7.01	2.25	0.423
	Male	58	7.57	3.17	
ARHS	Female	285	121.14	10.13	0.001*
	Male	58	116.16	12.08	

Mann-Whitney U test results from Table 3 show significant differences in favor of female teachers in ACLS and its sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$). In addition, statistically significant differences were observed in ARHS and in the "Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun" and the "Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit" sub-dimensions in favor of female pre-service teachers ($p > 0.05$).

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test according to pre-service teachers' grades are given in Table 4.

Table 4
The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test according to grades

		N	X	S _x	p
Acceptance	1 st Grade	39	32.05	3.95	<0.001
	2 nd Grade	136	33.58	3.86	
	3 rd Grade	95	34.70	3.93	
	4 th Grade	72	36.15	3.35	
	Overall	342	34.26	3.97641	
Awareness	1 st Grade	39	50.13	5.32	<0.001
	2 nd Grade	136	51.71	4.69	
	3 rd Grade	95	53.10	4.78	
	4 th Grade	72	54.56	5.13	
	Overall	342	52.52	5.05	
Valuing	1 st Grade	39	23.03	3.54	<0.001
	2 nd Grade	136	23.83	3.02	
	3 rd Grade	95	24.52	3.26	
	4 th Grade	72	26.82	3.07	
	Overall	342	24.56	3.38	
ACLS	1 st Grade	39	105.21	10.28	<0.001
	2 nd Grade	136	109.13	9.15	
	3 rd Grade	95	112.33	9.91	
	4 th Grade	72	117.53	9.21	
	Overall	342	111.34	10.21	
Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun	1 st Grade	39	78.10	10.56	0.082
	2 nd Grade	136	82.59	7.92	
	3 rd Grade	95	81.35	7.71	
	4 th Grade	72	81.39	8.43	
	Overall	342	81.48	8.38	
Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit	1 st Grade	39	30.69	5.84	0.609
	2 nd Grade	136	32.08	3.81	
	3 rd Grade	95	31.82	4.69	
	4 th Grade	72	31.49	4.35	
	Overall	342	31.73	4.44	
Attitudes toward the development of reading habits	1 st Grade	39	8.33	2.98	0.042
	2 nd Grade	136	6.99	2.08	
	3 rd Grade	95	6.68	2.10	
	4 th Grade	72	7.19	2.94	
	Overall	342	7.10	2.44	
ARHS	1 st Grade	39	117.13	13.86	0.236
	2 nd Grade	136	121.65	9.69	
	3 rd Grade	95	119.85	10.47	
	4 th Grade	72	120.07	10.44	
	Overall	342	120.30	10.65	

Kruskal-Wallis H test results in Table 5 show a statistically significant difference in ACLS and the sub-dimensions of this dimension ($p < 0.05$). The review of the mean scores showed that 4th-grade pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature are higher than other participants. Regarding ARHS, only the "Attitudes toward the development of reading habits" showed a statistically significant difference in favor of 1st-grade pre-service teachers ($p < 0.05$). The attitudes of 1st-grade pre-service teachers toward developing reading habits are higher than others.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test for taking children's literature courses are shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5
Mann-Whitney U test results according to taking children's literature courses

	Taking children's literature courses	N	X	S _x	p
Acceptance	Yes	168	35.29	3.77	<0.001
	No	175	33.26	3.92	
Awareness	Yes	168	53.76	4.96	<0.001
	No	175	51.31	4.86	
Valuing	Yes	168	25.53	3.35	<0.001
	No	175	23.64	3.15	
ACLS	Yes	168	114.58	9.91	<0.001
	No	175	108.21	9.50	
Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun	Yes	168	81.21	8.09	0.437
	No	175	81.74	8.65	
Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit	Yes	168	31.63	4.59	0.801
	No	175	31.80	4.30	
Attitudes toward the development of reading habits	Yes	168	6.91	2.50	0.123
	No	175	7.29	2.37	
ARHS	Yes	168	119.74	10.52	0.352
	No	175	120.83	10.75	

Mann-Whitney U test results from Table 5 show significant differences in ACLS and its sub-dimensions in favor of those who took children's literature courses ($p < 0.05$). In other words, the attitudes of pre-service teachers who took children's literature lessons are higher toward children's literature. However, no statistically significant difference was found regarding ARHS and its sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

The relationship between ACLS and ARHS

The results of the correlation analysis investigating the relationship between preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits are given below:

Table 6
Correlation analysis results

		Acceptance	Awareness	Valuing	ACLS	Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun	Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit	Attitudes toward the development of reading habits	ARHS
Acceptance	r	1							
Awareness	r	.515**	1						
Valuing	r	.379**	.598**	1					
ACLS	r	.770**	.894**	.776**	1				
Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun	r	.048	.199**	.264**	.205**	1			
Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit	r	.106*	.198**	.248**	.222**	.747**	1		
Attitudes toward the development of reading habits	r	-.047	-.178**	-.162**	-.160**	-.642**	-.551**	1	
ARHS	r	.071	.199**	.274**	.217**	.952**	.879**	-.507**	1

** Correlation coefficient within 99% confidence interval * Correlation coefficient within 95% confidence interval.

Regarding the correlation coefficients in Table 6, there is a statistically significant, positive, but weak relationship between pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits ($r=0.217$). There is a positive and moderate relationship between awareness, a sub-dimension ACLS, and ARHS ($r=0.657$). There is a positive and weak relationship between ACLS' valuing sub-dimension and ARHS ($r=.274$). In other words, when awareness and value of children's literature increase or decrease, a moderate or low-level increase or decrease occur in pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the habit of reading. A positive and low-level relation was discovered between the acceptance sub-dimension of ACLS and "Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit," a sub-dimension of ARHS ($r=.106$). In other words, it can be said that when acceptance of children's literature increases, attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading books also increase.

Regarding the sub-dimensions of pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading habits, there are positive and weak relationships between "Attitudes toward meeting learning needs and having fun" ($r=.205$), "Attitudes toward the meaning and indispensability of reading habit" ($r=.222$) and ACLS. However, there are negative and weak correlations between "Attitudes toward the development of reading habits" ($r=-.160$) and ACLS and its sub-dimensions ($r=-.047$, $r=-.178$, $r=-.162$). According to this, it can be concluded that as "Attitudes toward the development of reading habits" increase, pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature decrease.

DISCUSSION

The descriptive, difference and correlation analyses were conducted on the data obtained from 343 pre-service teachers to reveal the relationship between preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits. Preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature were high (4.28), whereas their attitudes toward reading habits (3.53) were moderate. Children's literature is essential in improving children's language skills during the preschool education process and learning many concepts and subjects. For this reason, preschool pre-service teachers must know and learn about children's literature products suitable for the development of the children, with diverse contents to appeal to various interests of children. The expectations of preschool pre-service teachers from the children's literature course are in this direction (Kanat, 2019, Ulutaş & Kıymaz, 2019). For this purpose, various well-known examples of children's literature were discussed by providing the necessary theoretical information in the children's literature course of the undergraduate program (Ulusoy & Altun, 2018). Therefore, it is expected that the attitude toward children's literature, which is an essential part of preschool education, to be high among pre-service teachers. Ulusoy and Altun (2018) examined preschool pre-service teachers' metaphors in children's literature. They stated that they produced numerous metaphors and emphasized the importance of children's literature in their metaphors. Similarly, in their study taking preschool pre-service teachers' opinions on children's literature, Ayrancı and Aytaş (2017) reported that pre-service teachers expressed the importance of children's literature in preschool education. In the study of Sönmez et al. (2021), examining classroom teachers' attitudes toward children's literature, teachers' attitudes were high. As seen in related studies, pre-service teachers have developed an awareness of the importance and necessity of children's literature thanks to their undergraduate education.

The studies on pre-service teachers' reading habits show that their reading habits were limited or under-developed (Altun, 2018, Esgin & Karadağ, 2000, Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008, Yılmaz, Köse, & Korkut, 2009). In their study aimed to determine the reading profiles of pre-service teachers attending the faculty of education, Çintaş Yıldız, Ceran, and Sevmez (2015) found out that the reading habits of pre-service teachers were weak. Dedeoğlu and Ulusoy (2013) also reported that pre-service teachers' reading attitudes were weak-medium. In the current study, pre-service teachers' attitudes were not weak and limited but rather moderate. It is thought that pre-service teachers' moderate attitudes toward reading habits can be improved.

In this study, the differentiation of preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits by gender was tested. A significant difference was found in favor of female pre-service teachers. Similarly, studies on pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading showed a significant difference in favor of female pre-service teachers (Arslan, Çelik, & Çelik, 2009, Odabaş et al., 2008, Özbay, Bağcı, & Uyar, 2008, Özdemir, Özdemir, & Kaya, 2015, Yılmaz & Benli, 2010). The study by Biçer and Ercan (2016), in which preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading habits were examined, concluded that female pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading habits were significantly higher, which supports the result obtained from this study. Similarly, Bozpolat (2010) concluded that female pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading books were higher than their male counterparts.)

Regarding the differentiation of preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits by grade, a significant difference was observed in favor of 4th-grade pre-service teachers. On the other hand, a significant difference was found in only one sub-dimension of the attitudes toward reading habits in favor of 1st-grade pre-service teachers. Similar studies examining attitudes toward reading likewise failed to find any difference according to grade, which supports the result of this study (Özbay, Bağcı, & Uyar, 2008, Sağlam, Suna, & Çengelci, 2008). In their study examining the attitudes toward reading habits of pre-service teachers attending preschool and classroom teaching programs, Kapıkıran and Kırmızı (2019) discovered that there was no significant

difference between 1st and 3rd-grade pre-service teachers. However, Biçer and Ercan (2016) found a significant difference in 2nd-grade preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading habits. Batur and Bek (2010) determined that 1st-grade pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading habits were weak. It is thought that this difference was due to the effect of variables such as the participant's socio-economic level and family.

Regarding the differentiation of preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits according to taking children's literature courses, another variable included in the study, attitudes toward children's literature differed significantly in favor of those who took the course. Regarding attitudes toward reading habits, it was observed that taking children's literature courses did not make any difference between pre-service teachers' ARHS scores. Similarly, in an experimental study by Özözen (2014), no significant change occurred in pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading habits after taking a children's literature course. Reading books is a habit that starts from a very early age and develops constantly. It is not easy to acquire a habit that should be acquired at an early age within a short period. Erdağı Toksun (2019) concluded that preschool pre-service teachers' reading habits are formed during primary school years. In addition, it can be said that the two-hour theoretical children's literature course in universities is insufficient as such different practices are needed (Karakuş, 2014, Kanat Soysal, 2020). The shortcomings in improving reading habits and attitudes should be removed, considering the importance of early childhood in acquiring reading habits and the role of preschool teachers in this regard. According to Karaaslan (2016), although primary and secondary school children's reading levels are better than the general population, the lack of reading habits observed in the following years shows that the education system cannot provide/maintain reading habits and reading culture effectively. Regarding children's literature courses and other courses in the undergraduate program, it is crucial to include practices that effectively develop reading habits and culture. The rote-based approach employed in the education system is an obstacle to gaining reading habits (Gömlüksiz, 2004).

A positive and weak relationship was observed between pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits. This positive relationship indicates that when one increases, the other will positively change, and vice versa. The fact that both attitudes are above moderate in pre-service teachers may be a factor in the weakness of the relationship. No study in the related literature researched the relationship between these attitudes of preschool pre-service teachers in the context of Turkey.

In conclusion, preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits positively affect each other. The higher attitude of female pre-service teachers suggests that male pre-service teachers have diverse interests. Regarding the grades, 4th graders' attitudes toward children's literature are significantly higher, showing that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature increased during their education. However, the lack of such a difference in attitudes toward the reading habit suggests that pre-service teachers focus more on academic studies than reading books during their university education. Finally, taking the children's literature course affects the attitude toward children's literature but does not affect reading behavior. Regarding correlations, attitudes have a positive effect on each other; thus, it can be concluded that a variable positively affecting an attitude will indirectly affect the other positively. In this context, an increase or decrease in the attitude toward children's literature means an increase or decrease in the attitude toward reading books. This relationship will help increase pre-service teachers' attitudes toward reading from moderate to higher levels.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study provided important information regarding the relationship between preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits in Turkey. The results of this study

will contribute to increasing the awareness of preschool pre-service teachers in Turkey regarding the importance of children's literature and book reading habits. However, the study has weaknesses as well as strengths. A limitation is that the quantitative design has prevented the evaluation of pre-service teachers' attitudes through observation and interviews. Another possible limitation is that the study was conducted with 343 pre-service teachers from three universities. Regarding this limitation, more in-depth studies on larger samples employing different research models should be conducted in the future.

Another limitation of this study is that other factors, such as the socio-economic status of the pre-service teachers participating in the research and their families, may also be important variables. The potential factors or drivers of the relationship between their attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits should be examined by considering these variables. In addition, the data obtained can be enriched by evaluating the relations between preschool pre-service teachers' attitudes toward children's literature and reading habits through a longitudinal study.

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