

An Investigation into How Parental Literacy Experiences are Reflected in Literacy Tendencies and Experiences of Preservice Teachers*

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to examine how parental literacy experiences were reflected in the literacy tendencies and experiences of preservice teachers. It is known that in order to offer an effective teacher education, it is necessary to know preservice teachers by analyzing their literacy practices originating from their parents and take into account their tendencies about how to develop reading skills of primary school children. The research presented here was a phenomenological study implemented with six senior preservice teachers of elementary education and their parents. The data of the study were collected through interviews with the preservice teachers and their parents and through observation notes. According to the results of the study, the preservice teachers' literacy experiences reflected their parents' characteristics, including parental literacy perceptions, literacy approaches developed by the parents for the preservice teachers, personal literacy experiences, general past experiences, number of literate people in the family, parental professional experiences, parental worldviews, and verbal communication within the family.

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INTRODUCTION

Prior to 2000, literacy studies had been mostly conducted in the cognitive field, but since then, literary practices have begun to address the cognitive aspects, explaining and defining them in the social and cultural context through new literacy studies (Rogers, 2011). Today, being a literate person not only means having gained literacy skills, but also conveys a broader meaning, including all language skills and a dimension related to how and for what purpose these skills are used. Furthermore, literacy is described and interpreted as political and social practices that create or limit opportunities for people who have become literate individuals, rather than only referring to knowing how to read and write (Freire 1972; Gee, 2000; Van Sluys, Lewison & Filint, 2006).

Literacy and Discourse Relations

Since literacy involves the visual and written texts of individuals and their interrelationships, a person examining literacy practices also has to investigate the discourse (statements) of individuals. This discourse includes not only language skills and literacy practices but also all the social and semiotic practices that shape lives of people (Gee, 1996; Hicks, 1995). Discourse, a form of communication through language, is defined as the means of language that individuals use to attain or achieve something in the world based on their knowledge of language and the way they articulate this knowledge. Analyzing the statements of individuals is an approach that examines how the language is used, as well as the extent of its use. In discourse analysis, instead of seeking direct answers to questions, the focus is on the details in the conversation with reference to the information being exchanged, trying to understand what a person really wants to say or the underlying political, cultural and historical situations in the background (Van Dijk, 1999). In addition, how information is structured socially is also examined (Gee & Green, 1998). Educational studies conducted through discourse analysis can be seen as an attempt to find answers to new definitions of literacy, create new theories, and devise new research questions and methods for the new literacy phenomenon (Rex, Bunn, Davila, Dickinson, Ford, Gerben, McBee Orzulak, & Thomson, 2010).

Everyone has stories/things to tell about their literacy experiences, and in terms this research as with everyone, past experiences have a significant influence on the literacy of preservice teachers. It is known that identities created by this influence play an important role in teachers' selection of written work for reading and writing, their educational styles, and interaction with their students (Parr & Campbell, 2011). Therefore, it is important to collect information about how preservice teachers acquire their literacy and how it matures, as well as gaining data concerning their socio-cultural background. This process can assist in providing them with a better education and raising their awareness of how information is transferred through language. The personal stories of preservice teachers are considered and explored as a rich source for teacher education (Zeichner, 2003). In this context, the parents, as the main characters of the personal stories of preservice teachers, should also be explored in terms of literacy experiences. This is of great importance for understanding the conditions under which the literacy of preservice teachers is shaped.

The Home Literacy Environment

According to the theory of social constructivism, literacy practices carried out at home with the family have a significant impact on language and literacy development. With reference to literacy at home, research has been undertaken on the basis of quantitative data, such as the number of books at home (Myrberg & Rosen, 2009), how many books are read at home, and the amount of time spent on reading and writing activities. However, there are few studies examining the qualitative characteristics of literacy and interactions about literacy (Leseman & De Jong, 1998; Van Bergen, van Zuijen, Bishop, & de Jong 2016). In these studies, it has been revealed that reading books with the family and doing literacy work at home are effective in developing a positive attitude toward literacy (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Mason, 1992; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1994; Johnson, Martin, Brooks-Gunn, & Petrill, 2008; Kiuru et al., 2013; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Research has revealed that 70% of the individual differences in literacy are related to the social environment and heredity (de

Zeeuw, de Geus, & Boomsma, 2015; Olson, Keenan, Byrne, & Samuelsson, 2014). It is estimated that the family dimension of the social environment has a greater impact on literacy, considering that children spend more time with their family, especially until the beginning of elementary school. Engaging with book reading activities with children at home beginning with the preschool period and developing their early literacy skills significantly influence the level of literacy children will attain at a later age (Mol & Bus, 2011; de Jong & van der Leij, 1999). In addition to helping to develop positive attitudes toward literacy, studies on literacy within the family at home have also been found to influence student success (Mason, 1992; Purcell-Gates & Dahl, 1991; Wells, 1985). A study conducted by Evans, Kelley, Sikora, and Treiman (2010) in 27 countries revealed that children growing up in a home environment where they are read books by family members are more likely to achieve academic success in future. Children's participation in literacy activities with their parents (and other adults) from early ages at home is one of the most important elements shaping their literacy identities and literacy approaches (Leseman & De Jong, 1998; Tavşanlı & Bulunuz, 2017; Ehri & Roberts, 2006; Saracho, 1997; Bindman, Skibbe, Hindman, Aram & Morrison, 2014). However, there are great differences in the literacy experiences that families provide at home and therefore assisting in preparing their children for school (Arnold & Whitehurst, 1994). Some of the most obvious differences in the literacy experiences of families stem from their socio-cultural experiences.

The Present Study

Children's experience with literacy at home and their parents' literacy practices, which provide the basis of linguistic and literacy skills in children, cannot be considered apart from parents' education, work, social networking, and socio-cultural contexts. It is believed that families' literacy traditions, life styles, educational statuses, differences in how they create a literacy environment at home, and the parents' own literacy histories affect children's language development and literacy tendencies. Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü and Mosier (1993) stated that functional and semantic relations between literacy practices and socio-cultural practices could not be ignored. It has been found that parents' literacy and socio-cultural experiences are related to how they guide their children in reading and writing, and that the children are influenced by these experiences to create literacy identities (Powell, Diamond, Bojczyk & Gerde, 2008). In this study, literacy was considered as not only a cognitive but also a social and cultural perspective, and the objective was to determine the kind of advantages and disadvantages of parents' literacy experiences / identities present. In this context, we focused on the family, school, business and university experiences in line with the discourses of families and preservice teachers. In addition, the parents' education and home literacy activities were taken into consideration. In this respect, this study aimed to determine whether the family has a real reflection on the preservice teachers' literacy development. It has been supported by research that to offer an effective education, it is necessary to elicit information from the preservice teachers by analyzing the literacy practices originating from their parents and take into account their tendencies concerning how to educate readers (Johnson, 2007, 2008; Parr & Campbell, 2011; Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

To conduct the current study, descriptive phenomenology was selected, which is one of the types of phenomenological research. Descriptive phenomenology offers an epistemological viewpoint that examines what individuals know and tries to define it by describing it (Creswell, 2012). Phenomenology studies generally aim to reveal perceptions and viewpoints about a previously determined phenomenon, with reference to the experiences of individuals (Reiners, 2012). This method allows an in-depth and multidimensional examination of a phenomenon that causes difficulties in terms of making sense, definition and analysis, even if the person is somewhat knowledgeable about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In this context, in this study, literacy experiences of fourth-year preservice elementary education teachers and literacy experiences of their parents were examined through interviews and observations carried out in the homes in which the preservice teachers lived with their parents.

Participants

In phenomenology research, the participants of the research should have experience about the case being studied and should be able to pass on these experiences (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). The study included six preservice teachers in their fourth year of the Elementary Education Department in Uludağ University and their parents.

The participants in the study were determined using the purposeful sampling technique of "maximum variation sampling" technique. When a small sample of maximum diversity is selected, the process of data collection and analysis will give two kinds of findings. These are common themes that may arise between the specific detailed descriptions of each situation, including sampling and the situations that differ greatly (Patton, 2001).

The reason for choosing these preservice teachers was that they had more literacy history being in their final year. In order to select the participants, firstly, the preservice teachers of the previous year were contacted informed about the content of the research to be conducted first and then given a short questionnaire, which asked the number of books the preservice teachers read annually, the frequency of expressing their thoughts in writing in various settings, whether they lived with their families, and if they wanted to participate in the study. From the responses to the form, six preservice teachers were asked to join the study on the basis of the diversity of the individuals and variety of their experiences. Of the participants, five were female and one was male. While explaining the characteristics of the preservice teachers and their families participating in the research ethics, their real names were kept secret and coded.

Hande, one of the participants, grew up in a family in which the parents were university graduates and provided a socio-economically high, accepting, reassuring and democratic environment. Hande created files related to researching, read publications, and recorded what she had found since her aim was to be an academician in future. She had good opportunities at home to become a literate person. Hande was in the forefront of her peers in terms of reading books, researching and writing educational texts, and took advantage of these opportunities. Some of Hande's writing can be found on websites that publish articles on education.

Gönül also grew up in a family with parents who were university graduates. Her father's level of literacy was part of his job, but her mother was less active in terms of literacy. Gönül was not at the same level as Hande in terms of literacy skills and use, but she drew attention with her regular reading and writing and continuing to engage in these activities. Gönül wrote poems to her boyfriend and father from time to time and reads magazines.

Mesut was the son of a teacher mother and an unemployed father. His mother was a university graduate while his father was an elementary school graduate. His family was at a moderate socio-economic level. Mesut grew up in an environment of extreme tolerance at home, in which everything the child did was welcomed and highly appreciated. Mesut, who had developed his literacy skills with his mother's support, continued to read different genres, but he did not write. He mostly read magazines, newspapers or internet sources. Mesut stated that he did not like to read long texts or literary works, such as novels.

Sezin's father was a university graduate, and her mother was an elementary school graduate. Unlike the other families, Sezin came from a large family structure, and she explained that this situation supported her literacy. She stated that her teacher father and her older sisters were influential in her literacy experience. For example, she said that her two sisters had different books and that she read these books. Sezin had the highest score among the participants in terms of grade point average.

The parents of Başak and Gamze, the other two participants, were elementary school and high school graduates. Both families were socio-economically at a moderate level and had a nuclear family structure. At home, Başak had been directed to read very accurately at home (in the sense of being a good student, not literacy). Even when faced with occasional serious problems in her education, she

improved her literacy skills, and she made comments that indicate that she was still capable in terms of her literacy. Başak considered herself as a good reader and particularly followed new publications related to education.

Gamze, on the other hand, grew up in a house where literacy was seen as a means of acquiring a profession, and she was presented with the idea that she should continue to read and have a good career. Nevertheless, she had released herself from these boundaries and managed to open a wider window of literacy in terms of enjoying reading, as well as reading and writing freely. However, her literacy experiences were more limited to reading.

Data Collection

The data of the study were collected through semi-structured interview questions posed to both the preservice teachers and their parents, and observational notes taken in the homes of the preservice teachers. The semi-structured interview questions were prepared after a preliminary interview was conducted with three elementary education preservice teachers and a subject matter expert. The interview form consisted of 18 questions to be directed to the preservice teachers and 17 questions to be directed to the parents. This form was presented for review by three subject matter experts working in literacy. In line with the comments and suggestions from the experts, two of the preservice teacher interview questions and one of the parental interview questions were removed from the interview form, and some questions were modified. Following the modifications, a semi-structured interview form consisting of 16 questions for the preservice teachers and 14 questions for the parents was sent back to the experts, and in the light of the feedback, it was confirmed that the form was suitable for the study. Pilot interviews with two preservice teachers and their parents were conducted before the actual interviews. During the pilot interviews, it was checked whether the semi-structured interview questions were in agreement with the specified aim and whether the questions were understood by the preservice teachers and their parents. Based on the outcome of the pilot interviews, it was decided that the semi-structured interview questions were suitable for the study, and the following questions were to be posed to the participants:

Preservice Teacher Questions

- Would you describe yourself as literate? (Are you literate?, What kind of books do you read?, How often and how long do you read it?, What other sources do you read other than books?, Do you read items on the internet?)
- How does your family usually spend their time?
- Can you tell us about the activities you do with your parents and how do they affect your language development?
- How did you learn to read and write?
- What kind of teaching method did your teacher use?
- What do you remember about the activities you engaged in to improve your language skills?
- Can you describe a moment about literacy that matters to you?
- What experience in your school years do you think influenced your current literacy level and engagement?
- Do you think the family influences literacy development throughout school life (preschool, primary, secondary, high school)? Can you explain this influence?
- Have you had a job? If yes, can you explain what it was and to what extent your work required the use of language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing)?
- How do you think university life has affected your literacy?

- What are the reasons that support or slow down the development of a good reader or writer?
- How do you think the family influences literacy development throughout university life? Can you explain?
- How do you perceive the world? What is your perspective on life?
- Has your worldview had an impact on your literacy experience? Can you explain how?

Parent Questions

- Would you describe yourself as literate? (Are you literate?, What kind of books do you read?, How often and how long do you read it?, What other sources do you read other than books?, Do you read items on the internet?)
- How do you spend time with your family at home?
- Can you tell us about the activities you think you have done with your family and that you feel encouraged language development?
- How did you learn to read and write?
- What kind of teaching method did your teacher use?
- What do you remember about the activities you engaged in to improve your language skills?
- Can you describe a moment about literacy that matters to you?
- What experience in your school years do you think influenced your current literacy level and engagement?
- Did you work before your current profession (for example, when you were a student)? If yes, then to what extent did your work require the use of language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing)?
- What is your current job?
- To what extent does your current job require language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing)?
- How do you perceive the world? What is your perspective on life?
- Do you think your worldview has an impact on your literacy experience? Can you explain how?

In addition to the interviews, all literacy-related issues in houses of the preservice teachers and their parents were noted by observing the home environment. The researcher took into consideration such factors as the availability of books, newspapers and magazines, the number types and topics of these books, and the conditions provided to the preservice teacher (a separate room, separate bookshelf, the preservice teacher's own books, and the types of these books).

The data of the study were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations made in the houses where the preservice teachers lived with their families. In this technique, the questions prepared before the interview are posed to each participant systematically and consistently. However, the researchers were free to ask any questions to conduct a more in-depth examination and were free to ask additional questions (Berg, 2000; Patton, 2001). The semi-structured interview technique allows the researchers this flexibility. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, new interviews were conducted with preservice teachers and their families about the points that had not been fully understood during the analysis process.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researchers in a prepared and tested space. When managing the interview, the researcher paid special attention to avoid being directive. At the beginning of the semi-structured interview, the participants were informed about the research and asked to examine the questions, and the written permissions were obtained concerning the audio recording of the interview. The audio records made during the semi-structured interviews lasted for a total of 433 minutes.

Analysis

In this study, the content analysis method (Merriam, 1998) was applied to understand the meaning of the words in the statements of the preservice teachers and their parents, the context in which these words were used, and the implications of the relationships between the statements of the preservice teachers and their parents. This method was also used to reveal the relationships underlying the statements in question.

The study was conducted face to face with the six preservice teachers and their parents and the interviews were audio recorded. The data obtained from the voice recordings were transcribed first and initially divided into groups for each of the preservice teachers and their parents. Statements implying that the parent influenced the preservice teacher in terms of literacy were identified in both transcript groups; i.e., preservice teachers and their families. In other words, interrelated dimensions were revealed in the statements of the preservice teacher and his/her parent. Subsequently, these relationships; i.e., the parts of the literacy experiences of the parent reflected in the literacy experiences of the preservice teacher, were organized into codes and themes. In the data analysis conducted by the three subject matter experts, the parents' influence on the preservice teachers in terms of literacy experience and mutual relations were investigated. Thus, an attempt was made to understand the reflections of the statements revealing the literacy experiences and socio-cultural practices of the parents in the preservice teachers. Finally, it was intended that the results would be strengthened by incorporating the previously taken observation notes into the analyses when analyzing and associating the data obtained from the statements of the preservice teachers and their parents. A total of 7 hours and 13 minutes of interviews were transcribed in the study, and 120 pages of documents were analyzed.

During the transcription of the data, the responses of the preservice teachers and their parents were transcribed, and attention was paid to ensure the accuracy of these transcripts. In order to ensure the reliability of the data, the audio recordings were compared by two other experts apart from the researcher. It was determined that there were very small differences between the records and the transcript, and these were also eliminated. According to the data obtained in the research, in the process of creating sub-themes, the researchers read the detailed breakdown of all the participants and formed the codes and sub-themes separately. In this process, the audio records added to the written text were divided into groups of preservice teachers and parents for each of the preservice teachers. The related dimensions were revealed in the preservice teachers and parents' discourse. Afterwards, these relations were divided into the codes and themes of the literacy experiences of the parents, which were reflected in the literacy experiences of the preservice teachers. During the process, the researchers gathered the data under the eight main themes of "parental literacy perceptions", "literacy approaches developed by the parents for their children", "parental personal literacy experiences", "parental past experiences", "number of literate people in the family", "parental professional experiences", "parental worldviews" and "verbal communication within the family". Thus, it was tried to gain an understanding of the reflections of the parents' literacy experiences and socio-cultural structures on the preservice teachers. In addition, it was aimed to strengthen the results by using the observation notes during the analysis and association of the data obtained from the preservice teachers and their parents' discourse.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study show that eight different situations in the lives of the parents affected the literacy experiences and tendencies of the preservice teachers. These were discussed as the themes of this study. Below are descriptions for each theme showing how these experiences of the parents were reflected in their children's literacy experiences and tendencies. During the analyses, the statements from the interviews, observation notes, and researcher notes were used to support the findings and to show the relationships between conversations.

Parental Literacy Perceptions

The examination of the statements of the preservice teachers and their parents showed that some of the parents regarded literacy as a concrete stage in the path of success and in acquiring a profession, and they thought literacy was a worthless activity if there was no result in terms of a career and perceived literacy as a means of creating the basis for children being able to find a good job in future. In this respect, the preservice teachers stated that their parents had not expected them to be qualified or highly literate, but to use this skill to get a job. The comments of a preservice teacher regarding this finding are as follows:

Gamze: “My mother is more of a despot, an authoritarian person. It is very important for her to be able to get somewhere and to be successful. In this respect, it is not that important that I have a reading habit or read a lot. Rather than my doing so, she expects concrete things from me. For example, my being appointed as a teacher is a concrete example of success for her. Without this, she is not very interested in how much I read or what I read. Furthermore, when I comment on a topic, if I am not successful, she does not regard this comment as valuable and teases me in public by saying things, such as ‘you know a lot because you read a lot!’ In such cases, rather than saying ‘you can trust what my daughter says; she knows because she reads a lot’, they disregard my words. This is, of course, a negative situation for me. What is important for my parents is numerical data, such as what my test score is. I read anyway, but who would not be upset in such a situation?”

Another preservice teacher expressed the expectation of the family to have a good future by becoming a literate person as follows:

Sezin: “I also have to thank my family. They never constrained me. They never told me not to read. Even my grandfather still tells me to read and does not say anything else. This is because how they think life is. There is a view that you cannot have a good future any other way. As I have been raised with this logic, constantly exposed to these directives, and as this has been imposed on me, I begin to think that this is the most important thing, which actually, in my opinion, is an important thing, as well. But, it would be nice if we could read something just to read!”

On the other hand, some of the parents perceived literacy as a way of learning, acquiring knowledge, and adding meaning to life by performing it in a sincere manner, without the expectation of academic achievement. From the statements of both the parents and the preservice teachers, it was understood that the children of these parents had a similar perception. Below are some of the examples of the statements of the preservice teachers growing up in a family who saw reading as enjoyment, learning and self-improvement, and examples of the statements of their parents:

Hande's mother: “I describe myself as a person who constantly does research, studies, and is very eager and enthusiastic to read and write since I learned to read and write. Even though I am interested in almost any kind of book, I mostly read books about my profession. We have two children. Education is very important in our home, and in conversations, books are definitely the first thing to be mentioned. So, this does not change at all.”

Hande: “Since my childhood, my mother has cared a lot about my literacy. For example, I was told (at school) that I was a bad writer when I was young, but my mother worked hard, and I can write very well now. Even in the preschool period, many books were bought for me. My father would buy them from the bookstore. My mother would read them to me at night when I was in bed. During the day, I would sit with my mother and read because I was the only child until the age of seven, which was just about the school age” ... “My parents never regretted the money spent on education and books. They still do not regret it. So, if I only have five Turkish Liras in my pocket, I would buy a book.”

Statements similar to Hande’s last expression above were found in the interviews of Sezin and Başak. In the later part of the interview with Hande, her comments about her father’s support continued:

“My dad also does the same thing, so he goes and searches for books for me. He’s still doing this. He says, for example, ‘Did you read this? Do you have this?’ He never discouraged me from reading books.”

This preservice teacher also talked about her sister, showing that regardless of the personal interest of the preservice teacher in literacy, the environment her parents provided also influenced her sister. She stated that her sister had also liked to read since childhood and already knew how to read and write when she reached school age.

Literacy Approaches Developed by Parents for Their Children

The statements of some of the preservice teachers and their parents revealed that the preservice teachers had been exposed to a challenging approach under literacy approaches adopted by the parents for their children. These parents aimed to force their children literate people; for example, one father stated, “They had to read books every day”, but the preservice teacher pointed out the negative consequences of enforcing reading. Samples of the statements of the preservice teachers and their parents are as follows:

Gönül’s father: “Children already have reading hours. They both have to read books.”

Gönül: “Reading would look too thick (she is talking about thick novels) to me, because they pushed me to read, and I would never want to read anything. ... You know, I also mentioned these things. But, as I said, they pushed me to read classic novels, and I took a dislike to reading.”

Based on the above statements, Gönül would be expected to have a negative attitude toward reading books. However, it was seen that her father allowed Gönül to select her books, which helped her to develop a habit of reading and love books, as explained in the following extract:

Gönül: “... one day we went to Sönmez (a bazaar of booksellers in Bursa) with my father. There, you know, he told me to select the books I wanted and he would buy them, and I picked a book that was very nice. After buying that book, I do not know whether my dad remembers, but I went there to buy more books, and I started reading books intensively at that time. Yes, I am a person who had previously thought that I did not like to read books. Then, I realized that it was very nice to read when I read books I loved.”

It is seen that this behavior of her father became a model to Gönül, and that she said that she would behave in this way in future:

Gönül: “I would encourage reading books in the same way, but I would not push anyone by saying, ‘You must read this book.’ I would also take the person with me and, they could then look at the pictures of books, check their topic, and would buy whichever they wanted to read.”

Whenever this person discovered a book they love, they would look at it, and since it is was already very nice to read it, the person would want to continue reading.”

Parental Personal Literacy Experiences

From the interviews, the personal interests of some of the parents were also reflected in their children’s literacy experiences. For example, a preservice teacher who regularly wrote poems said that she wrote poems because she was influenced by his father’s poetry writing. The following statements shows that both this preservice teacher and her father wrote poems to describe their feelings:

Gönül’s father: “I write poems. As time is so short, I show my love for my daughter, how much I care about her, and what I want her to do through my poetry.”

Gönül: “... You saw the poem my father wrote. I did studies on writing poetry using that. What’s more, the poem and the essay that I wrote during high school was published in the school magazine. I usually write poems when I’m very sad or very happy, to convey my feelings. There were times when I also wrote to relax. I even prepared a notebook for my boyfriend. We took photographs, and I wrote my feelings about them in a notebook. They were also things I wrote myself.”

Parental Past Experiences

The past experiences of the parents were reflected in two different ways in the literacy experiences of the preservice teachers. The first was that the parents were actively involved in social activities during their school years. This both improved their literacy experiences and enabled them later to guide their children in this direction. Examples of statements of the parents expressing that their active participation in social activities that affected their literacy are as follows:

Mesut’s mother: “I’ve read a lot of books... at a very early age. We also attended the same theater events. I memorized theater scripts in my middle and high school years. ... Reading poetry was actually the most effective contributor to my language skills. I read and memorized many poems.” ... “I believe that children should grow up with social activities. As a teacher, I think that social activities positively affect every kind of development of a child. I also think they have an effect in terms of literacy. Therefore, I think that beginning with kindergarten, children must do sports, folk dances, you know, theater, drama, poetry, and so on.”

Gönül’s father: “We did social activities at school. Our teacher was directing us. We did not disappoint him, either. When we were in the middle school, we joined a choir with the confidence the teacher gave us. After that, we started to get small theater roles. We began to participate in all the activities in school like basketball and football. In high school, too, my literature teacher said that my essays were very good and encouraged me. I was writing beautiful essays. I even continued to perform in the theater. Everyone would read for hours to be able to memorize the scripts. I would read just once to memorize the lines and then act my role.”

Gönül: “My family always encouraged me to play musical instruments and attend sports courses. I went to a violin course. I played in front of audience. I performed in a poetry event. I read poetry. We performed folk dance shows. I participated in those activities for a year. These made me look at things more aesthetically, and I have also begun to look at literacy more aesthetically.”

Another effect of parental past experiences on the literacy of the preservice teachers was shaped based on the things that the parents wanted to experience in the past but were not able to do. At this point, some of the parents were very self-sacrificing in their children’s educational processes and

provided all the necessary facilities because they had inadequate education in their own childhood. For example:

Gönül's father: "Because our father was a small-scale retailer, he was only able to fund the academic studies of one person. I want the children to do what I could not do. For example, I sent my daughter (to private school) but when she came here (in Bursa), her schooling was interrupted, and we could not send her to that type of school. Then, my son goes to a wonderful private school, but this is financially really difficult. Of course, I think I could have bought another summerhouse, I could have a better car. I don't do these things. I spend on my child's education. They are the future of the country. That is, we regard as such. They will be literate people."

Başak's mother: "...even though my mother and father were teachers at those times, we were not given that much attention. They were much more informed. They knew a lot about teaching. In my elementary school days, I have a very vivid and unpleasant memory from those days. I was a very busy and intelligent child in the fifth grade of elementary school. I mean, I was one of the favorite students of the teacher in the elementary school. I could express myself well. I remember I was studying in the bathroom. ... We had a little house then. We are three sisters, and we all slept in the same room. So, I put a chair in the bathroom not to disturb them. We had a big bathroom. It was when we first came to Bursa from Niğde. I put my chair in the bathroom and worked for hours. I still say, 'Mom, what kind of a mother were you? You let me work there'. ... If you spent as much as 25% of the time I spend with my child, I might have been somewhere else."

We understand from the statements of Başak's mother in the later part of the interview that these negativities experienced by the mother were turned into positives that are reflected in Başak's literacy experience:

Başak's mother: "I mean, when raising Başak, I did a lot of things which were the opposite of my own childhood.. Başak was one or one and a half years old. I was not working then. Until she was two and a half years old, I raised her alone. When she was just one year old, I decided to turn her room into a schoolroom for a whole year. I did this without any outside influence, without getting the idea from anywhere else. Now I say, 'How did I do it? What kind of patience did I have?' ... We got up at eight o'clock every morning. I dressed her as if she was going to school... and we began classes. ... I bought a bell at that time. When it was noon, I rang the bell for lunchtime, and ran to the kitchen to prepare a meal. That was how it was with Başak. When it was five in the evening, we said we were out of school. We changed into our sweatshirts or pajamas."

Başak also talked about this memory in her interview and she said that "It [the experience] influenced me, too". We also see the reflection of this sensitivity of Başak's mother when Başak shared the memories of the time when at a young age she stayed with her grandmother.

Başak: "... my grandmother's house would be so crowded in the winter or summer. What my mother said to my grandmother or to my aunts was, 'There should not be many guests when Başak studies at home' or they would send me to a different room."

The Number of Literate People in the Family

Based on the results, it was shown that the number of literate people in the family is another factor affecting children's literacy experiences. The statements of Mesut's mother show that Mesut was sometimes influenced by his brother, and the statements of Sezin show that she was influenced by her older sisters. For example:

Sezin: "...I had two older sisters. That is, I must have been inspired. I must have wanted to do some of the things they did. I mean, if I tried to do something, I'm sure they had a big share in

that. In fact, those books were their [older sisters'] books. I read plenty of children's books after that, but I had not seen anything like a children's book before. I only saw those three books [of her older sisters]. I thought that I had to read them. I may have developed a desire to read because of them [older sisters]."

Parental Professional Experiences

The information obtained during the interviews show that the professions of some parents were reflected in their children's literacy experiences and tendencies. Gönül's father, who worked in the police department, stated that he had to read all local and general newspapers due to his work and had to know what was happening. He also stated that he read novels related to his job, historical novels, and political novels. The reflection of this expression in Gönül emerged as something similar to "My dad read different sources due to his profession. Because of him, we also learned to obtain information from different sources rather than from one element." Again, Gönül's father said that he wrote a lot of official texts in accordance with his profession and that these documents had to be correctly expressed in organized, regular language, and in proper Turkish, without mistakes. This can be seen in the extract in Gönül's interview:

Gönül: "I would always go to my father in my essay assignments, because he writes very well. He creates long sentences easily. I usually asked him to help me to write."

Gönül also stated that she wrote poetry and essays which were published in the school magazine. We wondered whether her father's remarkable attention to detail in writing reflected in Gönül's work. To understand that, the notebooks in which Gönül regularly took notes were requested. These books were examined by the researchers. As a result of the examination, it was seen that Gönül also took notes using an organized and proper Turkish language, just like his father, in accordance with the grammar rules and punctuation marks.

In the interview, the effect of the behavior of her mother, who was a teacher in the past, was revealed in Hande's statements regarding her literacy:

Hande: "She brought home more books and various books. They were in English and in Turkish. My dad brought home books in German. We were doing reading hours together. Outside class, my mom devoted all her time to me. Perhaps her teaching enabled her to do things more systematically in the development of my reading habit by paying attention to things that would be appropriate for the level of the child."

Hande explained the process of her learning to read and write in this period as follows:

"My parents bought me TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) books. I was told that I wrote in the books the words that I saw there. Let me show you this (presenting the book to the researcher). So, I learned by myself. When I went to the school, I already knew how to read and write."

From the interviews with Mesut's mother, who was a teacher, it clear that she helped to improve his literacy skills by appropriate guidance. She explained that she guided Mesut as a reflection of her profession in these words:

Mesut's mother: "...regarding my professional background, we read books and magazines. ... Together we had such a productive time in his language development in the elementary school period. We read books, read fairy tales, talked about and reviewed them, and I enrolled him in theater studies. He was at my own school, and I worked with him during high school... I was also influential during his middle school. It was advantageous for him to be enrolled in my own school... I kindly asked his Turkish teachers and physical education teachers to bring him forward, encourage him, and direct him."

Mesut stated that his mother was asking his help when typing lesson plans or preparing materials. He said that he had read books with his mother for a certain period of time, and that both situations improved his reading and writing skills.

In Sezin's literacy experience, the effects of the parental profession were visible, as in the literacy of Hande, Gönül and Mesut. Sezin's father, who had retired at the time of the interview and had settled in Bursa for Sezin's university life, described this situation by referring to the times when he was teaching in Rize.

Sezin's father: "She probably saw us during the period when we were working. So, we were reading books, and she was doing that, too ... Now Sezin says, 'You were reading while you were in Rize, now you do not read.' This might have had an effect on her."

Sezin's memories about the same period clearly reveals the reflection of her father's profession on Sezin's literacy.

Sezin: "In Rize, there were quite a number of books behind the door of a room like this, from the floor to just about here (showing a certain height with her hand). My dad had a lot of books about education and so on ... I remember I would go near them. I would not read them. I did not know how to read, but I would open one, look at it, skim through, and leave it. Then, I would pick up another one and so on ... If books are constantly just in sight, if you don't know what is written in them, you want to learn."

Sezin also referred to her father's reading and writing in this extract:

Sezin: "... in the evening, at about 10 o'clock, he [her father] would pick up his textbook from the other room and open it. He already had some paper with him because they [mother and father] wrote lesson plans and daily plans every day My father's writing is also very beautiful. I have not seen anyone who writes as well as he does. He would open a notebook and neatly write what he was going to say. After that, I would also look at the text to understand what he wrote. Of course, I could not read it, but I would still look at it. I remember that. My father had a lot of books. He used to read."

Parental Worldviews

Another theme in which the parents' effects on the literacy experiences of the preservice teachers were visible is the worldviews that the parents possessed. Under this theme, it was revealed that the parents who stated that they respected the differences and also read the works of people who did not think like them and did not have the same worldviews as they had children who also adopted such an approach. It is interesting to note that although the parents who expressed this idea had a certain worldview, they welcomed reading from different sources. For example, one of the mothers and her daughter who defined themselves as conservatives explained their perspectives as follows:

Hande's mother: "... I am conservative. We have an understanding that attaches great importance to moral values... We have a way of life that always pays attention to them in order not to shake those moral values. It has been like this since my childhood, but we were friends with people from very different groups... I have never restricted my reading. I mean, I did not say that I must read this; I also say that I am curious about this and I am reading it. My husband is the same. We also show tolerance to our children."

Hande: "I think that I try to read every kind of book and every author. I mean, just because this is the political thought of this man, I do not give up reading his work, because I have to read the opposite ideas. I also read books that reflect my own thoughts. I mean, it is a comparison. Well, not a comparison, but how can I say it? I think I also need to read them to try to create an idea, or to work."

One of the reflections of the parents' reading the authors whose worldviews are not the same as their children emerged in the case of Gönül and her father, as shown in the extract below:

Gönül's father: "This is the worldview that we have. When we choose books, we consider that, but I also read books with an opposing view. Let's say you are reading book A. You cannot understand whether the thesis in this book is correct, unless you read the opposing thesis in book B, and then I read book C, too. So, you have to read book B in order to convince the person who reads book A or refute their ideas and say that it is wrong. Thus, you have to know the worldview of the person who you meet to be able to support or refute their understanding or convince that person."

Gönül: "I think this is quite normal (to read the books of people with different worldviews). For example, in the same way, the songs of rightist and leftist people. Some people won't listen to them. They criticize them by saying 'that person is rightist; that person is leftist; I don't listen to them.' I find it ridiculous. They can listen to and read their works. What is important is whether it is attractive. It does not really matter who wrote it."

In addition, one of the interesting points in the interviews was that a mother who defined herself as conservative and hardliner had a child who considered herself to be an open-minded person and did not approve of this conservative approach and tried to avoid classification and find a variety of different sources.

Gamze's father: "I love living based on my traditions. I don't want a certain rule, which I obey, to be changed. If I get used to something, it's not easy for me to change to something else. I mean, I don't want a certain thing to change or something routine to change. I don't know what I was doing, whether I was too hard on her. It happens."

Gamze: "Yes, this happens when we put ourselves into a classification situation. I'm just speculating: Let's say I'm a person with a conservative worldview. If I only read books with this perspective, I can't actually improve myself, because I might benefit from that segment of life and that worldview. In that case, I wouldn't be able to learn to be critical or for example, if I always read left-wing books, I will only see a side that regards the left as right and not criticize it, or it's more like a racist thing. When we don't classify things, I think we have a very wide range of views. There are a lot of such people in our generation who stereotype things say, 'I would never read that'. For example, they say, 'I never read Nihal Atsız' or 'I never read Nazım Hikmet Ran'. 'Necip Fazıl? I wouldn't even open his book'. If it is just presenting opinions, you don't have to read it, but the reality is when you are reading a newspaper, it isn't just reading a newspaper. You should be able to read both Sözcü and Sabah, or other newspapers like Habertürk (different newspapers in Turkey with various political perspectives). There is no such thing as neutral, everyone takes a side. We all can defend one side strongly or not, but we need to read and improve ourselves to see what aspects are missing because there is no such thing as being absolutely right. If I only read one side and believe that it is perfect, I think I would go backwards rather than improving myself. When I think about it in terms of my family, I have to consider whether they do that a lot? No, but at the point where it becomes different, I would already have done something. I don't have to share the same vision, even if it is that of my family or someone else. I don't have to put myself into the same framework of thought."

Verbal Communication Within the Family

The final theme concerned whether the parents used verbal communication effectively. One of the preservice teachers stated that she had gained effective listening and speaking skills from her parents. She used them in her daily life, and these experiences were particularly beneficial to the development of her writing skills. The views of the preservice teacher and her parent are as follows:

Gönül's father: "When we are together, I ask them questions about the situation in Turkey, their daily experiences, or their education. Both my wife and I ask. We listen to the pleasant things or problems they have experienced. If there's something we can do, we try to help. Of course, it is mutual. We allow them to express themselves. If there is something we can do, we try to help. If it is not something we can do, we say, 'You can handle it yourself; your self-confidence will improve.' In this way, we are trying to prepare them for their life in future.

Gönül: "I have never hesitated to ask people questions. Since I was comfortable in asking questions at home, I can also do this in my daily life. I think I'm a good listener. When people have any problems, they can easily open up to me; then I empathize and try to give advice. This approach originates from our habits at home. I don't even get tired of listening to people. I think my listening is reflected in my writing. I recognize more feelings and emotions through listening. I use them in my writing, too."

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The social environment, an inseparable part of human beings, affects many experiences of individuals, including the development of their literacy. Family is one of the most significant aspects of the social environment and influences the formation of many important factors, such as personality building, identity development, determination of behavioral patterns, and learning. This is because from birth onwards individuals will generally spend the largest amount of time with their families. Thus, the family has a major influence on the individual in the construction and development of personality, because it is the first environment in which the individual is educated and lives (van Bergen, van Zuijen, Bishop & de Jong, 2016). This situation is seen to be more dominant especially during the period until the beginning of formal schooling.

The family influences children in many dimensions, including academic achievement. For example, Fu et al. (2013) found that the family structure, how and at what level parents were educated, family income, communication between parents and other family members, and parental approaches were the main family-related factors in the child's personality development. Even the birth order of individuals in the same family is reflected in the personality traits of children in that the first children are academically more ambitious, responsible and organized, and the ones born later are more obedient, docile and easy going (Sulloway, 2001; Twenge & Nolen Hoeksema, 2002; Leaper, Anderson & Sanders, 1998). In another study, as a result of a meta-analysis, it was found that mothers' engaging in more communication with their daughters than with their sons was more effective on their daughters' reading habits (Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998).

As shown in the above research studies, parents significantly influence their children's personality development, and one of these effects involves the literacy experiences of children. Parents' appropriately guiding their children and providing them with a rich environment significantly affect the development of children's literacy skills (Ehri & Roberts, 2006; Saracho, 1997; Bindman, Skibbe, Hindman, Aram & Morrison, 2014; Tavşanlı & Bulunuz, 2017). Moreover, a research study concluded that during the literacy learning process, mothers are more effective than even elementary school teachers (Merga, 2017). According to the meta-analysis study conducted by van Steensel, McElvany, Kurvers, and Herppich (2011), parents' engaging in reading and writing at home with their children enriches their reading comprehension, code and comprehension skills. In that study, it was found that after elementary school teachers, fathers are the most effective people in this process. The purpose of the current study in which individuals' literacy experiences were examined from a social perspective was to determine which dimensions of the parents' experiences were reflected in their children's literacy experiences. The findings of the study showed that the preservice teachers' literacy experiences reflected their parents' characteristics, such as parental literacy perceptions and literacy approaches developed by the parents for the preservice teachers, together with personal literacy experiences, general past experiences, the number of literate people in the family, professional experiences, worldviews, and verbal communication within the family.

In this study, the examination of the statements of the preservice teachers and their parents about *parental literacy perceptions* revealed that some of the parents considered literacy as a concrete step on the career ladder; otherwise, they regarded literacy as a worthless activity, which upset the preservice teachers. On the other hand, the parents who regarded literacy as important and implemented various associated activities had children who adopted a similar perception of as their parents. In a qualitative study on preservice teachers conducted by Street (2003), a preservice teacher named Monica attributed her writing skills and her development of confidence as a writer to the multitude of reading sources at home and her parents who supported her reading and writing, as opposed to the negative experiences she had experienced at school. Thus, with her family's support, Monica overcame the negative experiences in writing at school. Monica described her father, who was a minister with a doctorate degree, as always writing. She described her mother as striving to make the home a rich environment in terms of resources and always emphasized the importance of reading and writing. In the same study, it was determined that the first memories of Veronica, a preservice teacher, was related to the literacy experiences that occurred within the family, not at school. Similarly, a survey of children aged 10–19 years shows that literacy experiences at home and the provision of quality reading environments at home are highly influential on children's reading habits (Wollscheid, 2013).

It was concluded from the statements of some of the preservice teachers and their parents that the preservice teachers were subjected to a challenging approach under the theme of *literacy approaches developed by the parents for their children*. The preservice teachers who had been forced to read books did not acquire the habit of reading books contrary to the expectations and were alienated from reading, whereas encouraging them without forcing was reflected in the children's liking to read books. Wollscheid (2013) emphasized the importance of creating environments at home where children would like to read books, and the importance of reading books with children, instead of verbally forcing children to read and enforcing rules for reading books. In addition, Leseman and de Jong (1998) found that the literacy quality of children who were exposed to parental pressure was 50% more likely to be affected than those that had not been exposed such pressure. In this study, it was shown that the parental literacy approaches initiated for children was influential at a level that would even eliminate the other factors negatively affecting the children's literacy.

In the current study, the *personal literacy interests* of some of the parents were also reflected in the literacy experiences of the preservice teachers, as understood from the statements in the interviews with the preservice teachers and their parents. Inoue, Georgiou, Parrila & Kirby (2018) stated that families who could not provide sufficient literacy resources for their children in the home environment could not adequately support their children's literacy development. Morrow and Weinstein (1986) suggested that families' visiting a library with their children encouraged them to be interested in reading and helped them to able to gain reading habits. In this context, it is possible to conclude that families who are personally interested in literacy provide their children with a more qualified literacy environment.

It was found that the *past experiences of the parents* were reflected in two different ways in the literacy experiences of the preservice teachers. First, the parents were actively involved in social activities during their school years, which both improved their literacy experiences and assisted them in guiding their children in this direction. Bennett, Weigel & Martin (2002) stated that children who were exposed to a range of rich literary materials at home beginning in the preschool period and who were educated in a literate family environment where events such as narratives, storytelling and drawing were shared with the family would be successful in reading and writing. According to the report by Eurydice (2011), children who read books, play vocabulary games and listen to stories in their childhood with their families are more successful than children who have not undertaken such activities with their families.

According to the results obtained in the study, another situation affecting the literacy experiences of the preservice teachers was *the number of literate people in the family*. Knoester and Pilkuhn (2016) found that siblings are effective social actors supporting literacy development and that social interaction within the family could improve reading skills and increase the likelihood of

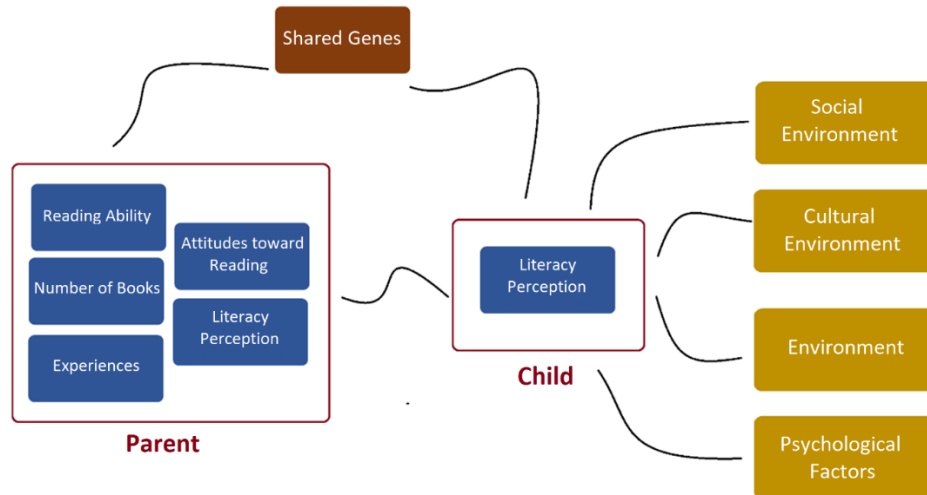
identifying oneself as a reader. Özbek Ayaz (2015) found that among the 85 parents in the lower socioeconomic status who read books with their children, the other members of the family also participated in the reading activities (15 children with their older sisters, and eight children with their older brothers). In that study, the parents in the lower socioeconomic status usually had more than one child and their educational statuses were low with 19 of the 125 mothers not being literate; thus, the task of reading with children in these families fell to older brothers and older sisters in addition to the mothers, and the fathers had little to do with reading.

The statements from the interviews show that *the parents' professions* were reflected in the literacy experiences and tendencies of the preservice teachers. Similarly, Savaşkan and Özdemir (2017) reached the conclusion that fathers' professions influence children's literacy lives and experiences. The researchers indicated that the children of parents who had occupations that could be counted among the elite professions tended to be more qualified literate people. Likewise, in a case study on a first-grade elementary school student whose parents were both academicians, Tavşanlı and Bulunuz (2017) found that the family supporting literacy experiences consciously and in a quality manner made a significant difference in the development of the child's literacy skills. Leseman and de Jong (1998) found that parental education levels and, consequently, occupational experiences affected the quality of children's book reading activities. A similar result was obtained by Van Bergen, van Zuijen, Bishop and de Jong (2016).

Another theme in which the parents' effects on the literacy experiences of the preservice teachers were visible is *the worldviews that the parents possessed*. Under this theme, it was revealed that the parents who stated that they respected the differences and also read the work of people who did not think like them and who did not have the same worldviews had children who also had such an approach. Likewise, it was shown that the values, beliefs, and ways of thinking that the family possessed were highly correlated with reading motivation and behavior (Chiu and Chow, 2010; Ogbu, 2007; Chiu, Hong & Hu, 2015). Chiu and Chow (2010) stated that children of families defending freedom were happier, enjoyed reading books more, and more easily acquired this experience as part of their lives.

The final theme implying that the literacy approaches of the preservice teachers reflected their parents' behaviors concerned *whether the parents used verbal communication effectively*. In his study, Ekinçi Vural (2006) concluded that active family support and social skills training for children were very effective in improving interpersonal communication, verbal explanation, listening, self-control, and similar skills. Since these skills are the main skills to influence children's literacy in the future, it is revealed that parents' effective verbal communication with their children is important. It should also be remembered that writing requires a set of skills and one of the ways of providing these skills is to communicate verbally in an appropriate way. An individual can acquire the knowledge, feelings, thoughts and experiences necessary to write by reading, observing, investigating, listening, and speaking; that is, by verbal communication (Calkins, 1986; Kaldırım, 2014).

The results of the research, reflections of the literacy experiences of the parents on the literacy tendencies, and experiences of the prospective teachers are summarized in Figure 1.



The results of the current study revealed that the children of the parents who intensively experienced literacy at home had good literacy qualities. For this reason, it is recommended that the institutions that determine educational policies carry out studies on families to ensure literacy environments in their homes. It is also recommended to encourage parents to engage in literacy activities at home. For example, in the Netherlands, the Dutch Ministry of Education sends a literacy package to the families of all children who have reached the age of three. It includes books children to read, activities to improve literacy skills, and brochures aiming to increase the literacy awareness of the family. In this respect, various activities to improve the literacy skills of children are suggested to the families of students who are older than three to four years, in order to create awareness in the general society (Erginer, 2012). It should not be forgotten that the first social environment of children is family and the behaviors gained from childhood within the family are maintained in the lives of the majority of people. For this reason, institutions that determine educational policies and the ministries responsible for family and social policies should encourage literacy studies with the family at home from an early age.

This study investigated the background of literacy (how it was shaped) and how the literacy experiences of preservice teachers reflected their parents' attitudes toward literacy. In the study, the results showed how the literacy skills of preservice teachers were affected by their parents. According to the results, the experiences of the parents of the preservice teachers were influential in the formation of their children's literacy experiences and identities. In other words, it was found that children inherited the negative or positive experiences of their families in terms of literacy.

Generally, in educational research, quantitative situations focusing on achievement, skills, and attitudes are intensively investigated, but only results-oriented interpretations are introduced by focusing less on the circumstances and causes in which the skills, achievement or attitudes emerge. However, there are developments, experiences, and stages that lead to the emergence of results, and examining them provides us with a perspective on why the behavior, the skills or the attitudes emerge, develop, or fade away without development. For this reason, it is recommended that future research should address the social aspects of education, and in-depth investigations should be carried out to reveal the situations that shape an individual's literacy. For example, in this study, the reflection of the parents' literacy experiences in the preservice teachers was examined. In subsequent studies, the factors affecting the literacy experiences of children who attend different levels of schools can be investigated. It can also be discussed how individuals' literacy is influenced by conditions, such as teachers, children's living in large or fragmented families, and many different situations in human life.

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