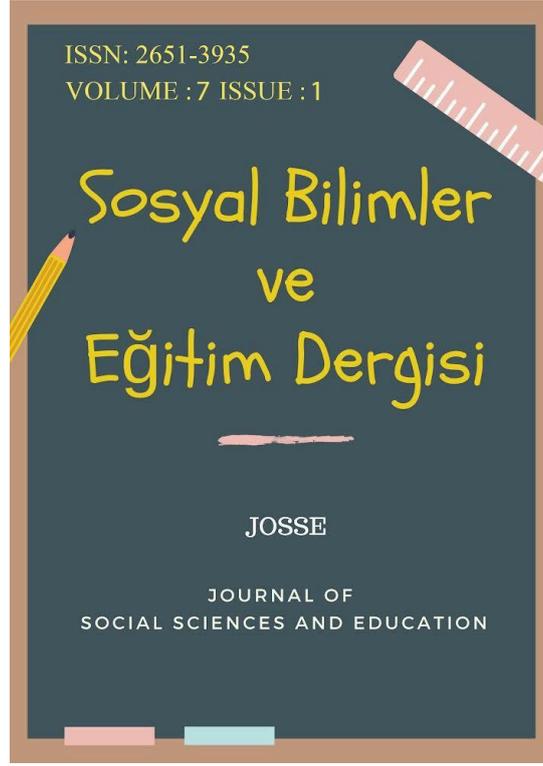


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Children and Reading Culture in The Digital Age

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Abstract

As a social being, human beings affect the environment they are in and are affected by the environment they are in from the moment they are born. These interactions change depending on the human's ability to make meaning, that is, the ability to read. In the digital age, technologies have become a part of daily life. It has dominated people's lives and changed their perspective on life and the way they live their lives. The task of protecting children from the negative effects of the digital age, which especially affects the psychological, physical, social and cognitive development of children, and the task of developing reading culture is on the family, school and society. Therefore, the aim of this study is to define the concept of children and reading culture in the digital age by presenting a different perspective and to inspire new research to be conducted. Document analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study. Researches on the subject were analysed. In the findings section of the study, the importance of the child and the family raising him/her in the current age, the digital age and the effect of the digital age on reading culture are discussed. As a result, reading culture in the current age enables children to gain in-depth knowledge on various subjects, to evaluate events from different perspectives and to acquire critical thinking skills. Parents and teachers can work together to help children acquire a reading culture.

Keywords: Digital age, children, reading culture, education, family

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Introduction

One of the greatest goals of human beings, who are social beings created superior to other created beings in terms of their minds, hearts, emotions and thoughts, is to know and make sense of themselves. People who know themselves and are aware of the purpose of their creation can realize their responsibilities and limits. From an early age, humans have a sense of curiosity, a desire to explore and learn new information.

Nowadays, children are introduced to technological products at an early age, causing them to have too much knowledge before school age. This leads them to experience a world that is very different from the world experienced by previous generations. These developments raise the issue of how children should be educated to prepare them for the modern world. (Star & Bowker, 2006; Nawaila, Kanbul & Ozdamli, 2018).

People use reading skills as a means of communication in order to express themselves comfortably for certain purposes in their lives, to gain knowledge and to raise their cultural level. It is important for individuals to spend their early childhood periods in a qualified way in order to gain reading skills, which is an important element of individual, social, cultural and economic development and change, and to create a reading culture in society.

In the digital age, where information is processed electronically, technological developments, product diversity and internet use have increased, the way children access information, communicate and learn has changed. Digital media tools such as the internet, television and mobile phones are important sources of information and socialization that affect children's characters, identities, behaviors, emotions and thoughts (Karaboğa, 2018).

The digital environment is made up of complex networks and contents such as various values, meanings, production and living habits. In digital environments, individuals need autonomy in order to create their own living universe and living culture, to make their own choices, and to make their own decisions. Because digital environments are the environment of individuals who can choose their own values and direct themselves (Taşdelen, 2022).

It is known that we live in a world where nearly half of the population is online, including 70 percent of individuals between the ages of 5 and 24 (International Telecommunication Union, 2018). Interacting with digital devices from early childhood, using the internet, opening social media accounts, and using mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets have become quite common. In the study conducted by Aral and Doğan Keskin (2017), it was stated that children use digital tools from an early age. In

addition to the benefits of digital technological products, it is necessary to be aware of the dangers involved, especially for vulnerable children.

For a child's psychological, social and mental development, the reading habits, attitudes towards reading and the values given by the society in which he/she lives, that is, reading culture, are effective. Situations such as facilitating access to information with rapidly developing technology, individuals spending more time on the internet, especially on social networking sites, and having internet access in every home bring reading skills to a different dimension (Ketenoğlu Kayabaşı & Özerbaş, 2018).

Reading culture is the level and quality of an individual's, a social group's or a society's relations with the act of reading, and the individual and social way of living related to the act of reading (Yılmaz, 2009). In order to shape the future of societies in a sound way, the developmental characteristics of children should be taken into account in the use of digital technological products from early childhood. In order for children to have a good reading culture, it is necessary to be sensitive and knowledgeable about the factors that may affect their learning style, thinking style, emotional reactions, interactions with their surroundings, peer relations, emotions, temperament and developing personalities.

When the research on the subject is examined, it is seen that the factors affecting the process of children's acquisition of reading culture are family, socioeconomic level, environment, school, teacher, friend, text, library, library, qualified work, book selection, mass media and media (Bağcı Ayrancı, 2021; Baki & Gökçe, 2020; Bulut, 2018; Çıldır & Ergün, 2021; Karaosmanoğlu, 2019; Kasımoğlu, 2014; Özkan, 2021; Sever, Karagül & Doğan Güldejoğlu, 2017; Ülper, 2011).

Today's children, as tomorrow's leaders, will soon take responsibility for the developments and experiences in the world, making it imperative to understand them (Mustola, et al., 2018) Therefore, this research defines the child in the digital age in which technological changes and developments are rapid. It also expresses the importance of being a role model for children to realize the advantages and disadvantages of the digital world in order to develop their reading culture and to be able to exist in digital environments.

Method

The aim of this study is to describe the process of acquiring reading culture of children growing up in the digital age. Document analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. Document analysis is defined as the collection and systematic

examination of printed or digital materials related to the phenomena targeted to be researched and their evaluation in line with the purpose of the research (Sak et al., 2021; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Sources related to the subject were scanned and information was collected. The information obtained was classified and presented under relevant headings. The data obtained as a result of the study were analyzed using descriptive analysis method and recommendations were made.

Findings

In this part of the study, which aims to define the process of acquiring reading culture of the child growing up in the digital age, the factors affecting the child and reading culture in the age we are in are emphasized.

Child in The Digital Age

Childhood refers to a different stage of human life. This different stage is a stage of development and upbringing in terms of the formation and maturation of the mind, emotions, perceptions, social and moral personality (Taşdelen, 2022). It is important to spend childhood, which is one of the most important periods of human life, in a healthy, peaceful and happy way in order to make a good start in life and lay the solid foundations of a qualified future. In the digital age, early childhood experiences have a significant impact on recognizing and developing children's interests and talents, becoming an individual who knows himself/herself and is beneficial to the society he/she lives in, and establishing the right balance between real life and technology.

In order to monitor and support the development of children, it is necessary to know the child, to know the characteristics of the developmental periods and to show the respect that the child deserves from birth as a human being. The environment in which the child lives and the environmental stimuli he/she encounters have a great impact on his/her spiritual, mental and physical development.

In terms of children's spiritual, mental and physical development and education, the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers are to support children's digital learning and development and to protect them from digital risks. It is important for parents and teachers raising children in the digital age to pay attention to their own behavior, actions and discourse, to be selective about digital content, to share their sensitivities about the content with their

children, and to prepare a suitable environment for the child to express their feelings and thoughts.

In the digital age, children's ability to correctly understand the events they experience and the situations they encounter, to make inferences about the events they experience, to make predictions about what might happen, to reach solutions to the problems they face by establishing cause and effect connections in their minds, and to express their emotions correctly improves their social communication skills. In order to develop these skills, children need to have a rich reading culture.

Reading Culture

In today's world, where digital technological developments and transformations are gaining momentum, it is possible for individuals to adapt to the requirements of the digital age with their effective reading skills. The foundations of reading success and being a qualified reader are laid in early childhood. The environment in which children grow up, their experiences, the support and attention given to children affect their reading skills, their interest and love for reading, their reading habits and reading culture.

Individuals with a good reading culture have in-depth knowledge on various subjects, evaluate events from different perspectives and use critical thinking skills. The internalization of reading culture in society is possible by raising individuals who can transform reading skills into culture and increasing the number of these individuals (Öztürk, 2020).

Reading culture consists of five interdependent and interconnected phases that follow each other as a sequential process involving individuals' reading habits, reading skills and reading understanding. These processes, which follow a progressive sequence, are listening habits, reading-writing skills, reading habit skills, critical reading skills, and universal literacy skills (Sever, 2013; Sever, 2015).

Listening habit, which is the first stage of reading culture, is acquired in preschool period. The universal literacy skill, which can be possessed by an individual who has acquired a reading culture that develops with reading habits and is structured with critical reading skills, enables the individual to quickly obtain information about information and current events (Baki & Gökçe, 2020).

While technological changes and developments continue rapidly in the digital age, it is important to support children in the process of acquiring a reading culture from an early age and to be a role model for children in order for children to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the digital world, to protect them from its negative effects, to use digital

products correctly in accordance with their purpose and to learn the methods of being in digital environments.

Factors Affecting Reading Culture

The family is the core and foundation of a society. Having a child is a great cause of happiness for the mother and father. The family is the source of love and compassion for the child (Aydın, 2021). In the process of a child's acquisition of reading culture, family members' communication with their children in daily life, reading interactive books together, singing and repeating rhyming songs have a critical role in developing their language skills (Foy & Mann, 2003; Korth & Marshall, 2009).

The family can contribute to their child's development in line with their socioeconomic opportunities and cultural environment. The cultural environment and socioeconomic level of the family, which affect children's development from different angles and ensure the development of reading culture, play an important role (Arıcı, 2016; Çıldır & Ergün, 2021).

The process of bringing the reading culture, which is first created with the support of the family, to the individual is developed through activities carried out at school. Reading culture begins to form with the family, while school is the theoretical and practical field. Because school environments, where children spend the most time outside the family environment, have a great impact on reading processes.

The function of being a role model and guide in the process of acquiring reading skills and culture at school is undertaken by teachers, who are the cornerstone of society. Teachers have great responsibilities in the process of children acquiring reading culture (Özkan, 2021).

In order to improve the reading culture of their students, teachers should teach them reading strategies, create a rich library of books suitable for children's level and interests in the classroom environment, enable students to talk about books, support students' in-class work, and help them decide which book to read, where, when, how and for what purpose.

One of the factors that are effective in an individual's acquisition of reading culture is the circle of friends, and the circle of friends in which the individual is located can help shape the world of reading (Özkan, 2021). The activities that children do with their friends support the process of acquiring a reading culture.

Today, it is known that families are intensely interested in digital technological tools and use them to control their children's behavior from an early age. As a result, digital tools can become children's most important occupation, friend and caregiver (Zeybekoğlu Akbaş &

Dursun, 2020) It is emphasized that parents are effective in children's being so intertwined with technological tools.

Yılmaz (2009) states that the attitude and approach of the media is important in the process of creating and developing a reading culture in society. In addition to mass media such as newspapers and magazines, mass media such as computers, internet, radio and television are also effective in children's acquisition of reading culture (Sever et al., 2017).

Media, which is an element that directly affects reading culture in the digital age, should be used correctly. Because reading habits remain under the influence of social media and cause the characters in the media to be taken as role models. The reading habits of young people on social media and the role of media on children's acquisition of reading culture should be studied (Bağcı Ayrancı, 2021).

Results and Discussion

Digitalization has affected children's reading culture. In the digital age, printed books, newspapers, magazines or, in general, texts printed on paper have taken on a digital form by being transferred to computers and phones through digital Technologies (Öksüz, 2022).

It is very important to develop a reading culture by being aware of the digital age. A study (Yılmaz, Atalan Akdeniz, Emre & Tercan, 2022) was conducted in which all studies on reading culture were compiled and presented as a bibliography. Children touching books, reading books to children, and communicating with books from an early age is the most important step in the formation of a reading culture. In order to structure the process of acquiring a reading culture effectively, it is necessary to bring children together with qualified books and the right applications (Samur, 2018).

Children complete most of their development in early childhood. A child's ability to realize a qualified learning is possible with a good education and educational environment. Therefore, the family and the school, which will provide these environments, have important duties. In order for this process to be successful, school-family and child cooperation is necessary. Thanks to the positive collaborations to be made, environmental factors affecting the development of the child will have a positive effect (Hayber, 2022).

Families, schools and teachers should work in cooperation to help children develop a love of reading. In order to create a reading culture, reading clubs, literary events and author talks, spaces where individuals can share their reading experiences, give advice and enjoy reading together should be created.

Bulut (2018) examined various variables and activities related to the acquisition of reading culture and found that families and teachers could not choose books suitable for the level and that unqualified children's literature products were used in activities.

An individual with a reading culture is an individual who can use thinking and criticizing processes effectively. Reading skill is a complex cognitive process involving brain parts responsible for language, vision, cognition, motor and emotions. Reading culture develops evaluation, problem solving, critical, analytical thinking and interpretation skills (Dimitrova, 2021).

As a result, reading culture is a level reached when the act of reading turns into a habit and critical reading skills. This level can be defined as an individual's ability to understand the information encountered in life from the perspective of a good reader, which can be called universal literacy. Reading culture involves not only reading books or written materials, but also actively participating visually, auditorily and intellectually.

Recommendation

Ways to create a reading culture in the digital age can be listed as follows:

- Children can be introduced to quality books that will interest them at an early age,
- Reading clubs can be created from an early age with the support of children,
- Children can be supported to donate books,
- A supportive, encouraging and inspiring environment can be created for reading,
- Reading activities can be prepared in cooperation with the teacher and family,
- Book designs can be made taking into account the age of children,
- Reading environments can be prepared next to playgrounds for children.

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