Preservice Social Studies Teachers' Views on Middle School Students' Levels of Historical Literacy

Samet Çiçek*, Osman Akhan

Akdeniz University, Turkey

Corresponding author: Samet Çiçek, E-mail: ciceksamet01@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This research aimed to present reasons and solutions that soon-to-graduate preservice social studies teachers expressed in relation to middle school students' low level of historical literacy as reported in the literature. To this end, we used a basic qualitative research design. The sample consisted of 30 soon-to-graduate preservice teachers (17 women and 13 men) who were studying social studies teaching at the faculty of education of a state university in the 2019-2020 academic year and already served their teaching internship. The data were collected using the semi-structured "Interview form" developed by Keçe (2013). The data were analysed using descriptive analysis. According to the analysis results, the preservice social studies teachers stated that middle school students' low level of historical literacy was generally due to the methods and techniques used by teachers in teaching historical topics, students' lack of interest in historical topics, and the lack of parental encouragement. The preservice teachers also highlighted that students should be encouraged to use social media tools properly and the content of historical series, films, documentaries, and television shows should be adjusted to students. **Key words:** Social Studies, Pre-service Teachers, Historical Literacy

INTRODUCTION

History is one of the major disciplines that make use of the content that social studies produces at the primary and middle school levels (Sunal & Haas, 2005; Kabapınar, 2014). Social studies is a field of study that relies on the content and study methods taken from social sciences and other disciplines, incorporates the main topics of cultural heritage in the curriculum and seeks to build skills necessary for social criticism and action (Garcia & Michaelis, 2001). History is a branch of science that describes the political, military, economic, religious, and cultural activities of people living in the past based on cause-effect relationships by referring to their place and time (Köstüklü, 2006). History is a field open to interpretation internally and an argument about the past (Akıncı, 2020). In other words, history is a record of both the past and the past of humanity that exists beyond our knowledge (Allen & Stevens, 1998). It is important to learn and teach history as it activates national and spiritual feelings, carries cultural heritage to today, and stimulates the desire to discover and learn (Memioğlu, 2004). History teaching is an important stakeholder in creating citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities, adopt a democratic and universal perspective, research, question, demonstrate empathy and knowledge of time and chronology, and think critically in keeping with the objectives of national educational curricula (Yıldız, 2003).

The teaching of historical topics in social studies classes should focus on strengthening students' loyalty to their homeland and developing their historical thinking skills rather than creating a narrow perception of history in students (Ersoy & Öztürk, 2015). Historical consciousness basically refers to an intergenerational mental orientation to time, which relies on the human capacity to think back and forth in time. Historical consciousness refers to the interaction between making sense of the past and building expectations for the future (Ahonen, 2005). Students' capacity to orientate themselves in time by seeing the present and future in the context of the past depends on their ability to make use of the past and have an understanding of the discipline of history. Otherwise, students would favour accepting ready-made versions of the past or refusing all attempts as they are inherently deceitful (Lee, 2005).

It is of key importance to discuss and think about past events, people, conditions and so on while teaching historical topics. History educators informed by the theories of educational, cultural, and social development, which argue that learning is not only the acquisition of information, put forward the concept of "historical thinking". Historical thinking means that history education is not based on simple memorisation. Analysis and interpretation of events from multiple perspectives show that historical topics are of profound importance beyond "memorisation" (Parkes & Donnelly, 2014). In other words, historical thinking refers to students' ability to analyse, understand, interpret and reword historical events establishing causality within the contexts of place and time (Çiviler, 2019). Seixas (2017) defined students' historical thinking skills as their

competence in negotiating productive solutions and proposed the following concepts related to historical thinking: historical significance, primary source evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspective-taking, and ethical dimension. These concepts were proposed as a broader idea of developing a historical consciousness which is defined as the present awareness of the past and the connection between the present and the past. Historical literacy involves historical thinking skills and helps students become informed and active citizens (Bennett, 2014). It is a systematic process with certain skills, attitudes and conceptual understandings that mediate and develop historical consciousness (Taylor & Young, 2003). Historical literacy involves the processes of analysing, evaluating and explaining the data from the past rather than expressing the historical information learned at the knowledge level (Deniz & Kübeli, 2015).Historical literacy is based on understanding what history is, recognising the importance of historical events, recognizing its rules, and organising concepts underscored in the method of the discipline of history, such as past, case, incident, cause, and effect (Ata & Keçe, 2014). Taylor and Young (2003) put forward 12 knowledge- and skills-based dimensions that make up the concept of historical literacy (Table 1).

(Taylor & Young, 2003, p. 33)

Historical literacy means cultivating active historical consciousness and implies a more integrated perspective on the components of history teaching that have been the principal focus of the contemporary scholarship, such as narrative structures that shape historical understanding, development of historical reasoning competencies, and the ability to contextualise (Baildon & Afandi, 2018). Historical literacy skills enable individuals to address historical situations from a critical and creative perspective and detect contradictory expressions by comparing different sources of information found in the search phase (Uluçay, 2019). Students should develop historical literacy skills which refer to a set of skills that provide students with tools to understand a text from a historical period because the true historical understanding of a person, place, or event in a historical period requires historical literacy (Walker, 2006).

Thus, it is of profound importance to integrate historical thinking skills into history education and equip students with a high level of historical literacy skills (Keçe, 2015). However, it has been found that the Turkish education system has failed to bring up history-conscious individuals equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values required by historical literacy (Keçe, 2015). In Turkey, middle-school historical topics are incorporated into the social studies curriculum with an interdisciplinary approach. In addition to in-service teachers' views on students' low level of historical literacy (Keçe, 2013; Ata & Keçe, 2014), preservice social studies teachers can also offer insightful ideas on students' level of historical literacy as they interact with students during their internship in practice schools. Preservice teachers observe students in practice schools during their last year of study and gain experience through teaching practice. During their internship, preservice teachers teach current historical topics covered in the social studies curriculum and have the opportunity to observe students and receive student feedback.

Table 1. Knowledge- and skill-based dimensions related to historical literacy

Dimensions of Historical Literacy	Definitions
1. Events of the Past	Knowing and comprehending historical events, utilising prior knowledge, and appreciating the significance of diverse events.
2. Narratives of the Past	Perceiving the form of change and continuity over time, discerning multiple narratives and coping with open-endedness.
3. Research Skills	Collecting, analysing, and utilising the evidence (artefacts, documents, and graphics) and understanding the issues of provenance.
4. The Language of History	Understanding and dealing with the language of the past.
5. Historical Concepts	Comprehending historical concepts such as causality and motivation.
6. ICT Understandings	Using, understanding, and assessing information and communications technology-based historical resources (the virtual archive).
7. Making Connections	Connecting the past with the self and today's world.
8. Contention and Contestability	Grasping the "rules" and the place of public and professional historical debate.
9. Representational Expression	Perceiving and applying creativity while representing the past through film, drama, visual arts, music, fiction, poetry, and ICT.
10. Moral Judgement in History	Recognising the moral and ethical matters involved in historical explanations.
11. Applied Science in History	Realising the use and value of scientific and technological expertise and methods in studying the past, e.g. DNA analysis or gas chromatography tests.
12. Historical Explanation	Applying historical reasoning, synthesis, and interpretation (the index of historical literacy) to explain the past. Historical understanding is unfinished without explanation.

Against this background, this research aimed to present reasons and solutions that soon-to-graduate preservice social studies teachers who served their internship expressed in relation to middle school students' low level of historical literacy as reported in the literature (Tay, 2007; Keçe, 2009; Keçe, 2013; Ata & Keçe, 2014; Ouakrim-Soivio & Kuusela, 2012, akt. Khawaja, 2018; Veijola & Rantala, 2018).

Objectives and Research Questions

The aim of the study was to analyse the opinions of preservice social studies teachers on the reasons why middle school

students have low historical literacy and their suggestions. In accordance with this aim, following research questions were determined:

1. What are the opinions of preservice social studies teachers on the reasons why students do not use information communication technologies and social media channels (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc.) so much in learning and researching history and their suggestions?

2. What are the opinions of preservice social studies teachers on the reasons why students have low interest in TV programs, theatre performances, documentaries and novels about historical issues and their suggestions?

3. What are the opinions of preservice social studies teachers on the reasons why students do not have enough knowledge or skills in ordering historical events in chronological order and their suggestions?

4. What are the opinions of preservice social studies teachers on the reasons why students have low skills in analysing the conflicting and inconsistent comments in historical texts and their suggestions?

5. What are the opinions of preservice social studies teachers on the reasons why students have low skills in establishing cause - effect relationship for historical events and their suggestions?

6. What are the opinions of preservice social studies teachers on the reasons why students have some problems in empathizing with the past and their suggestions?

METHOD

Research Design

The study used a basic qualitative research design. Basic qualitative research focuses on how individuals construct facts as a result of their interaction with their social world. In basic qualitative research, researchers are interested in what sense people make of experiences, how they build their world, and how they interpret their lives (Merriam, 2018).

Sample

The sample consisted of 30 preservice teachers (17 women and 13 men) who were soon-to-graduate final-year students studying social studies teaching at the faculty of education of a state university in the 2019-2020 academic year. The university and faculty were selected using convenience sampling and the sample group was selected using purposive criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involves recruiting individuals who meet predetermined conditions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Convenience sampling was preferred because it provides easy access to people and adds "speed and practicality" to research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). The selection criteria for the sample were as follows: being a preservice social studies teacher (because the social studies teaching program is suitable to explore students' historical literacy) and being a soon-to-graduate final-year student who served their internship in the 2019-2020 academic year (as they interacted with and observed middle school students

and practised teaching). Sampling was also based on the principle of voluntary participation.

Data Collection Tool and Data Collection

A search of the literature (Tay, 2007; Keçe, 2009; Keçe, 2013; Ata & Keçe, 2014; Ouakrim-Soivio & Kuusela, 2012, akt. Khawaja, 2018; Veijola & Rantala, 2018) showed that middle school students' levels of historical literacy are lower than expected. Therefore, Keçe (2013) interviewed social studies teachers to find out why students' historical literacy is not at the expected level. The interview form developed by Keçe (2013) to explore teachers' views on the reasons for students' low level of historical literacy and their possible solutions was used as the data collection tool in the present research. The interview form consisted of six questions that relate to the following six dimensions of historical literacy: *use of ICT skills, narrative skills, chronological thinking skills, and the ability to discern contradictions in multiple interpretations, causation skills, and historical empathy skills*. The questions ask about views on the reasons for students' low level of historical literacy and possible solutions.

In the process of collecting data, online education was adopted in the 2020 spring term due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When this process began, the sample group of preservice social studies teachers experienced one semester (12 weeks) of classroom observation and 5 weeks of practice. During this process, they attended online courses run by internship schools within the scope of distance education. The data were collected from the soon-to-graduate preservice teachers through e-mail interviews as there was no opportunity to meet face-to-face due to the pandemic. Researchers can conduct in-depth e-mail interviews through multiple online exchanges that do not necessarily have to be synchronous (Creswell, 2018; Meho, 2006; Kazmer & Xie, 2008). The interview data collected from the preservice teachers were organised into a dataset synchronously by the researcher and two subject-matter-expert researchers.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The main purpose of descriptive statistics is to summarise and interpret qualitative data according to pre-defined themes and present the data in an organised and intelligible way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Accordingly, the data obtained from the descriptive analysis were summarised and interpreted.

During the data analysis, the data were analysed by the researcher and a subject matter expert synchronously. The agreement between the coders was computed using the following formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994): Percentage of Agreement = Agreement [118]/(Agreement [118] + Disagreement [10]) × 100. The intercoder agreement was found to be 92%, thereby affirming the reliability of the analysis. The presentation of the findings was also supported by direct quotations from preservice teachers' views (e.g. PT1: Preservice Teacher 1, PT2: Preservice Teacher 2, and so on).

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings derived from preservice teachers' views on the reasons for students' low level of historical literacy and possible solutions.

Preservice Teachers' Views on the Reasons and Solutions for Students' Low Use of ICT and Social Media Channels (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc.) to Learn and Research Historical Topics

In line with this sub-problem of the research, the preservice teachers were asked: "Students actively use ICT and various social media channels (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc.). However, the use of these tools for learning and researching historical topics has been reported to be quite low. As a preservice teacher, what do you think are the reasons for this situation and what solutions do you offer?". Table 2 shows the findings derived from preservice teachers' responses to this question.

Looking at teachers' views on the reasons for students' low use of ICT and social media channels (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc.) to learn and research historical topics in Table 2, it is apparent that most preservice social studies teachers stated that "the virtual environment serves only entertainment purposes and students have little interest and curiosity". Looking at the solutions that the preservice teachers offered, the most commonly offered solutions were "to teach subjects in a way to engage students" and "to use interesting videos about history". Looking at the findings together, the preservice teachers generally held the view that students have little interest in history as they cannot use social media properly; however, their interest could be increased by the acquisition of historical literacy. To illustrate, some of the preservice teachers' views are given below:

> *"We have become a world of consumption, not production. "Social media such as Instagram contain daily, momentary excitement for consumption rather than production. While you waste your time on social media, others make a profit from it. Most people are not aware of this. While you waste your time, people you see and watch are after their own lives. I hope this will decrease somehow. I do not know how to keep children away from all these. But if we keep children away from mobile phones as much as possible and if we encourage them to do things like reading and painting when they are younger, they will rarely want a mobile phone."* (PT6)
> *"Social media is a space that young people often use to get away from the realities of life and engage in a fun environment. Thus, historical research and like is hardly mentioned. If students who study especially history and relevant disciplines, carry out organised work by making stories out of history and using impressive pictures and photos, the transfer of historical knowledge can be increased."* (PT13)
> *"Apparently, today's Generation Z pay less attention to their own historical and cultural values. One of the biggest reasons for this, I observe, is that different civilizations value what benefits their cultures. To increase the attention of Generation Z to historical topics, who use social media a lot, some events can be held on social*

Table 2. Reasons and solutions expressed by the preservice teachers

	Views	f
Reasons	Virtual environment serving only entertainment purposes	9
	Students' lack of curiosity	7
	Teachers' monotonous and boring lectures	7
	Influence of popular culture	7
	Poor reliability of virtual environments	3
	Lack of apps and web pages	2
	Failure to develop historical consciousness at a young age	1
	Parents' ignorance of students' uses of social media	1
Solutions	Subjects can be taught in a way to engage students.	6
	Interesting videos about history can be used	5
	History classes can be taught more enjoyably and engagingly.	3
	The use of educational games can be increased.	3
	The use of virtual museums can be increased.	3
	Students can be encouraged to research.	3
	Stories and impressive visuals of historical topics can be created.	3
	Secure web pages can be designed.	2
	Social media awareness can be raised.	2
	Short films can be watched.	2
	Documentaries about leaders can be watched.	2
	Parents can encourage students to use helpful social media resources.	2
	Knowledge competitions can be organised using mobile networks.	2
	Subjective information on social media can be restricted.	1

> *media or award-winning competitions can be organised to encourage them."* (PT27)
> *"We have to help students love history so that they want to explore history. Social media sites such as Instagram and Twitter where they spend 10 hours a day is full of things that students like and are interested in. Social media engage their attention. This is also true for history. History should be first loved, and then curiosity will come after."* (PT30)

Preservice Teachers' Views on the Reasons and Solutions for Students' Lack of Interest in TV Shows, Theatre Performances, Documentaries, and Novels That Address Historical Topics

In line with this sub-problem of the research, the preservice teachers were asked: "Students have little interest in TV

shows, theatre performances, documentaries, and novels that address historical topics. As a preservice teacher, what do you think are the reasons for this situation and what solutions do you offer to remedy this situation?". Table 3 shows the findings derived from preservice teachers' responses to this question.

Looking at teachers' views on the reasons for students' lack of interest in TV shows, theatre performances, documentaries, and novels that address historical topics, as shown in Table 3, the most commonly expressed reasons were "the dullness of such shows" and "the lack of interest in history. The solutions frequently offered by the preservice teachers were as follows: "more enjoyable shows can be produced" and "students' interest can be directed to instrumental social media platforms. Looking at the findings together, the preservice teachers generally stated that the relationship between parents, schools, and teachers should be regulated to promote students' internal motivation. To illustrate, some of the preservice teachers' views are given below:

> *"Their interest is low probably because it has not been strongly stimulated by parents and teachers since primary school years. I think that students should be encouraged to develop such interests at an early age."* (PT9)

> *"There is not enough curiosity about history. Activities such as trips and theatres should be organised to arouse curiosity about the history of the whole world, especially Turkish history."* (PT16)

> *"The length of historical books reduces students' interest. It is also hard to understand the language of history books as they are not written in modern Turkish. Books can be written in a more intelligible language that is suitable for today's young people. They can also have more interesting and intriguing content."* (PT23)

> *"Students view the history lesson as a memorisation-based lesson. Because of this perception of the history lesson, students show little interest when they are told to watch a documentary on history. To offer a solution, the lesson should be made more fun to break down students' prejudice against history. Fun films suitable for students' age can be watched."* (PT27)

Table 3. Reasons and solutions expressed by the preservice teachers

	Views	f
Reasons	The dullness of such shows	11
	Lack of interest in history	7
	Failure to develop historical consciousness	6
	Lack of parental support	4
	Not doing enough research	3
	Lack of encouragement from teachers	3
	Length of history books	3
	High economic cost	2
	Lack of influential directors	2
	Failure to develop a habit of watching such content	2
	The dependency of such shows on TV ratings	1
	Heavy language of books	1
	Students' lack of time	1
Solutions	More enjoyable shows can be produced.	7
	Students' interest can be directed to instrumental social media platforms.	4
	Teachers can be encouraging.	4
	Students' curiosity should be aroused.	4
	Discussion activities can be used in the classroom environment.	4
	Historical series and films can be produced.	3
	Parents can be encouraging.	2
	Students can be taken to theatre performances and the like.	2
	A bridge can be created between the past and the present.	2
	Academic guidance can be used.	2
	Novels can be used to exemplify and illustrate historical topics.	1
	Modern language can be used in books about history.	1
	Content of shows can be revised.	1

Preservice Teachers' Views on the Reasons and Solutions for Students' Lack of Knowledge and Skills in Organising Historical Events Chronologically

In line with this sub-problem of the research, the preservice teachers were asked: "Students lack knowledge and skills in organising historical events chronologically. As a preservice teacher, what do you think are the reasons for this situation and what solutions do you offer to remedy this situation?". Table 4 shows the findings derived from preservice teachers' responses to this question.

As shown in Table 4, the preservice teachers most frequently cited "historical topics based on memorisation" and "failure to create a plotline" as the reasons for students' lack of knowledge and skills in organising historical events chronologically. As for solutions, the teachers offered "to use timelines for visualisation" and "to teach history with a special emphasis on chronology". Looking at the findings together, the preservice teachers commonly focused on the need to exemplify and illustrate abstract historical information. To illustrate, some of the preservice teachers' views are given below:

> *"If we manage to attract the attention and interest of our young people, they will not have a problem with the chronological order of events. We must stop making students memorise history."* (PT18)

> *"The main reason for students' failure to connect between information units is that they memorise. Another reason is the lack of knowledge. Because they do not fully understand events and assimilate what they have been taught, they cannot connect between events. Thus, no permanent learning happens. Students can be encouraged to act with a sense of curiosity and research by themselves so that their interest in and motivation for*

Table 4. Reasons and solutions expressed by the preservice teachers

	Views	f
Reasons	Historical topics based on memorisation	15
	Failure to create a plotline	10
	Students' reluctance	7
	Students' lack of knowledge on the topic	4
	Failure to establish a cause-and-effect relationship	4
	Teachers' failure to apply chronological knowledge	4
	Students having different types of intelligence	4
	Abstract nature of historical topics	2
Solutions	Timelines can be used for visualisation.	8
	History can be taught with a special emphasis on chronology.	4
	Students' active participation can be encouraged.	4
	Storification can be used in classes.	3
	Films and books can be recommended.	2
	The drama method can be used in classes.	1
	Memory booster activities can be used.	1
	Documentaries can be used.	1
	Coding methods can be used.	1

Table 5. Reasons and solutions expressed by the preservice teachers

	Views	f
Reasons	Students' lack of knowledge about the topic	10
	Students having not read enough historical texts	8
	Students not investigating events from multiple sources	7
	Students' low capacity for comprehension and interpretation	6
	Failure to establish a cause-and-effect relationship	4
	Students not reading historical novels	3
	Students' lack of interest and willingness	3
	Students' poor critical thinking skills	2
	Not enough importance attached to the history lesson	1
	The expansiveness of historical topics	1
	Students' poor listening skills	1
	The huge amount of information pollution	1
Solutions	Students can be encouraged to read from different sources.	8
	Students' capacity for interpretation can be improved.	5
	Students' learning levels can be promoted.	4
	Students can be helped to love history.	3
	Primary sources can be used.	3
	Works authored by objective people can be used.	2
	Meaningful learning can be realised.	2
	A separate lesson for reading historical texts can be offered.	2
	Objective assessments can be made.	1
	Historical topics can be taught in chronological order.	1
	Films and documentaries can be used.	1

historical events can be increased. In this way, students' learning motivation and knowledge increase as they reach information by themselves." (PT22)

"Students believe that history requires memorisation and is hard to keep in mind. This belief undoubtedly makes them disinclined to learn historical events and confuse the sequence of events. Therefore, visual materials can be used more often in schools. Students may be asked to prepare easy-to-remember timelines individually or working in groups." (PT27)

"I think they are incapable of perceiving chronological order because history is taught as a mess of information. Teachers and students together can design a schedule or chart at the beginning of the semester and add to that chart what they learn as they proceed through the history lesson." (PT29)

Preservice Teachers' Views on the Reasons and Solutions for Students' Low Ability to Discern Contradictory and Inconsistent Interpretations in Historical Texts

In line with this sub-problem of the research, the preservice teachers were asked: "As a preservice teacher, what do you think are the reasons for students' low ability to discern contradictory and inconsistent interpretations in historical texts? And what solutions do you offer to remedy this situation?". Table 5 displays the findings derived from preservice teachers' responses to this question.

Looking at the reasons for students' low ability to discern contradictory and inconsistent interpretations in historical

texts, as shown in Table 5, most preservice teachers stated that students "lack knowledge about the topic" in question and "have not read enough historical texts". As for solutions, they offered to improve students' capacity for interpretation and encourage students to read from different sources. Looking at the findings together, the preservice teachers held the view that students can develop a positive attitude if they go through all stages of higher-order thinking while analysing historical texts. To illustrate, some of the preservice teachers' views are given below:

"Educational institutions teach ready-made and hackneyed information. Curricula should certainly be made open to students' comments and criticism." (PT13)

"The main reason is the lack of knowledge. Because they do not study key texts about historical events, they absorb the information as it is presented to them without logical reasoning. Students can be recommended to use works of historiographers of that time and primary sources." (PT23)

"They cannot discern because they do know the history. No history teacher ever made me love history. I always counted the remaining minutes in history classes. Most history teachers read books and made us read. As student teachers, we do not want to teach history classes in that way. We want to attend a lesson and experience that lesson. If we can tell this to all teachers, we will make students love the history lesson and this problem will also disappear." (PT25)

"I think that they cannot discern inconsistencies in historical texts because teachers do not focus on solving this problem in classes. Teachers directly address historical topics in history classes, but they do not tell how to read history. Teachers should first develop students' historical literacy skills." (PT29)

Preservice Teachers' Views on the Reasons and Solutions for Students' Low Ability to Establish Causal Relationships between Historical Events

In line with this sub-problem of the research, the preservice teachers were asked: "As a preservice teacher, what do you think are the reasons for students' low ability to establish causal relationships between historical events? And what solutions do you offer to remedy this situation?". Table 6 displays the findings derived from preservice teachers' responses to this question.

As shown in Table 6, the preservice teachers most frequently cited "the failure to make a storyline", "students' lack of knowledge", and students' lack of chronological knowledge" as the reasons for students' low ability to establish causal relationships between historical events. As for solutions, they most frequently offered that teachers could enrich learning. Looking at the findings together, the preservice teachers cited traditional learning environments as the reason for students' failure to establish causal relationships between historical events and argued that activating learning can help establish causal relationships. To illustrate, some of the preservice teachers' views are given below:

"A lack of knowledge makes it difficult to establish a cause-and-effect relationship. Meaningful learning and permanent learning can be achieved by reinforcing students' knowledge." (PT4)

"Historical events can be the consequence of the previous one and the cause of the next. Thus, it becomes difficult to form a link between causes and effects unless historical events are well known. If historical topics are narrated like a story in a fun way that facilitates remembering, if the causes of historical events are told in detail, and if question and answer strategy is used, then students will not forget quickly." (PT20)

"Students only memorise historical events. They only take the information that they need to pass their exams without establishing a cause-and-effect relationship. When describing historical events in classes, we should tell the cause of an event, talk about the previous and next events, and relate the consequences to the next event. The most important solution that I can offer

Table 6. Reasons and solutions expressed by the preservice teachers

	Views	f
Reasons	Failure to make a plotline	9
	Students' lack of knowledge	7
	Students' lack of chronological knowledge	5
	Students' inclination towards memorisation	5
	Students' inability to draw inferences about topics	3
	Failure to develop a habit of reading books	3
	Students' poor critical thinking skills	2
	Undeveloped research skills	2
	Students' lack of interest in history	1
	Teachers' inability to use the right method	1
Solutions	Teachers can enrich learning.	9
	Students can be taught the importance of chronological knowledge.	5
	Students can be encouraged to acquire a reading habit.	4
	Topics can be taught using storification.	3
	Historical topics can be made enjoyable.	3
	Activities such as brainstorming can be done.	2
	Question-answer teaching strategy can be used.	2
	Teachers can objectively communicate information.	2
	Reinforcement can be done for permanent learning.	1
	Students' critical thinking skills can be sharpened.	1

would be to enhance students' interest and curiosity in historical events. In this way, students will have access to information by themselves." (PT22)

"Because students do not know historical events and their effects on one another, they have difficulty connecting historical events. I think that it will be helpful to associate events with one another rather than talking about them one by one." (PT25)

Preservice Teachers' Views on the Reasons and Solutions for Students' Lack of Historical Empathy

In line with this sub-problem of the research, the preservice teachers were asked: "As a preservice teacher, what do you think are the reasons for students' lack of historical empathy? And what solutions do you offer to remedy this situation?". Table 7 displays the findings derived from preservice teachers' responses to this question.

As shown in Table 7, the preservice teachers most frequently cited "students' inability to think in keeping the conditions of the relevant period in mind" as the reason for students' lack of historical empathy. As for solutions, they offered most frequently "to use the drama method" and "to provide information about the conditions of the relevant period". Looking at the findings together, the preservice teachers stated that students' historical analysis and understanding

Table 7. Reasons and solutions expressed by the preservice teachers

	Views	f
Reasons	Students' inability to think in keeping the conditions of the relevant period in mind	14
	Students' poor empathy skills	6
	Students' inability to connect with the past due to the use of the lecture method	3
	Students' lack of historical knowledge	3
	Abstract nature of topics for students	3
	The idea that history is outdated	3
	Students' lack of national consciousness	3
	Students' lack of interest and willingness	1
	Failure to narrate topics like a story	1
	Learning only for passing exams	1
	Students' inclination towards memorisation	1
Solutions	The drama method can be used.	11
	Information about the conditions of the relevant period can be provided.	11
	Historical readings can be done.	7
	Historical films and documentaries can be watched.	5
	Lectures can be enriched.	3
	Illustration and exemplification can be used when teaching historical topics.	2
	Change and continuity can be made noticeable.	1
	Affective aspects of events can be highlighted.	1
	Examples of heroism can be given.	1

skills were usually at the remembering level and argued that students can acquire higher-order thinking skills if their historical consciousness is developed. To illustrate, some of the preservice teachers' views are given below:

> *"We are lazy in thinking and turn to memorisation. Students take the easy way out and study only to pass exams. Thus, they fail to achieve permanent learning. Before theoretical information is given, students should first be taught how to learn, how to access information, how to use information, and how to make learning permanent. Thus, it will be easier for students to connect events and consider the past on its own merits."* (PT8)

> *"Today's conditions are highlighted, and the conditions of the past are not taken into account. However, each period has its own peculiarities. We always take the easy way out and cannot expand our thinking. And when we fail to empathize, we give rise to historical misconceptions. For this reason, we must teach students to judge events in line with the conditions of their period."* (PT11)

> *"Students fail to empathise because historical events are not narrated like a story or in a way to help students visualise them. The solution is to do the opposite. If historical events are narrated like a story, students can visualise them, put themselves in the shoes of a prominent historical figure, and show empathy."* (PT13)

> *"Because students find historical events abstract, they compare past events to present events. This negatively affects historical empathy. In the first class, we should build the awareness that we must study history with the judgements of the relevant period. Students can compare past events to present events. But we have to take students to that specific moment and make them live in that moment. Drama can be used to act out a certain event so that the conditions of that period become clear."* (PT23)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research set out to present reasons and solutions that soon-to-graduate preservice social studies teachers expressed in relation to middle school students' low level of historical literacy as reported in the literature.

Most preservice teachers held the view that middle school students make little use of ICT and social media channels (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc.) to learn and research historical topics because they use social media for entertainment purposes only and have little interest and curiosity Looking at the findings together, the preservice teachers offered the following solutions to remedy this situation: to stimulate students' interest and motivation in classes, to encourage students to research, and to include activities aimed at popularizing history topics in social media. In their study on social studies teachers' views on the reasons and solutions for students' low level of historical literary, Ata and Keçe (2014) also concluded that students use social media for fun. In accord with the present results, in their research with middle school and high school students, Şişman Eren (2014) found that students use social media to interact with others. The preservice teachers stated that students have a lack of interest in TV shows, theatre performances, documentaries, and novels that address historical topics because they find such shows boring, have little interest in history and are not encouraged by parents to show interest in such content. As for the solution to this situation, they offered that historical shows, series, and films with more enjoyable content may be produced and teachers may encourage students in this regard. Walker (2006) emphasises that using films as primary sources in teaching historical topics can provide students with the ability to develop their own ideas rather than memorising facts and improve their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Likewise, Woelders (2007) noted that students can compare the content, values, and images in films with other sources of information to build their own understanding of the past.

The preservice teachers cited historical topics based on memorisation, teachers' failure to create a plotline, and students' reluctance as the reasons for students' lack of knowledge and skills in organising historical events chronologically. As for solutions, the teachers offered to use timelines for visualisation, to teach history with a special emphasis on chronology, to promote students' active participation, and to teach historical topics using storification. In a study aimed to improve fifth-grade students'

historical time conceptions and chronology perceptions, Şimşek (2007) investigated the use of timelines in history teaching. He used timelines for the activity to develop students' ability to perceive time and chronology and observed that students could list the given events chronologically. He also argued that the use of historical time tools with an effective strategy is quite effective in students' understanding a given subject.

Stow and Haydn (2000) emphasised that chronology, as a dimension of historical literacy, holds a central place in children's development of historical understanding. The preservice teachers cited the following as the reasons for students' low ability to discern contradictory and inconsistent interpretations in historical texts: students' lack of knowledge about historical topics, they have not read enough historical texts, they have a low capacity to interpret and research historical events using different sources. As a solution to this problem, the preservice teachers offered that students can be encouraged to read from different sources, their capacity for comprehension and interpretation can be improved, and primary sources can be used in classes. In a similar vein, in their experimental study on the use of first-hand sources (evidence) in teaching historical topics in social studies classes, Tangülü and Çıdacı (2016) found a difference in favour of the experimental group taught using primary sources with evidence-based activities and reported that their achievement increased. Işık (200) also reported that the use of rich material, historical documents, and primary or secondary written sources fostered students' interest in history classes. Epçaçan (2018) argued that an individual's self-improvement and higher-order skills depend on reading comprehension and the ability to interpret readings using rich sources.

According to the preservice teachers, the reasons for students' low ability to establish causal relationships between historical events were teachers' failure to create a proper plotline in classes, students' lack of knowledge about historical events, and students' lack of chronological knowledge. To solve this situation, they offered that teachers could enrich learning, draws students' attention to the importance of chronological knowledge, and encourage students to develop a habit of reading books. In keeping with the reasons cited by the preservice teachers in the study, Çelikkaya and Kürümlüoğlu (2019) concluded that students have insufficient knowledge of chronology and argued that it may be due to factors such as shortcomings related to equipment, teachers, curricula, methods, technique, and textbooks because the concept of historical time is abstract.

The preservice teachers cited the following as the reasons for students' poor historical empathy skills which represent another dimension of historical literacy: students' inability to think in keeping the conditions of the relevant period in mind, students' generally poor empathy skills, and students' inability to connect with the past due to teachers' use of the lecture method. In parallel to this result, in their research on teachers' perceptions, views and experiences of historical empathy, Yılmaz and Koca (2012)

reported that teachers' perceptions of historical empathy were quite weak; therefore, they did not use historical empathy as a process in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of history classes. In the present study, as a solution to students' poor historical empathy skills, the preservice teachers offered to use creative drama that facilitates students' active participation, to do readings on history, and to make use of historical films and documentaries. Ata and Keçe (2014) also reported that social studies teachers offered techniques such as creative drama to develop empathy skills. In a study that aimed to develop students' historical empathy skills using creative drama in social studies classes, Güneş (2019) also found that creative drama improved students' historical empathy skills. According to the results of the present research, the preservice social studies teachers stated that middle school students' low level of historical literacy was generally due to the methods and techniques used by teachers in teaching historical topics, students' lack of interest in historical topics, and the lack of parental encouragement. The preservice teachers also emphasised that students should be encouraged to use social media tools properly and the content of historical series, films, documentaries, and television shows should be adjusted to students. Based on the results of the research, the following recommendations can be offered:

- Further research may use an experimental pretest-posttest control group design to investigate dimensions in which students have low historical literacy.
- Teachers may hold meetings with parents to foster students' historical literacy.
- Teachers may be given seminars on active learning methods that can be used in teaching historical topics.

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