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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Look at Middle School Students' Reading Preferences: Interviews with Teachers and Students

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What is already known on this topic?

- *The childhood and adolescence period is a critical threshold in the construction of a reading culture.*
- *Many factors influence an individual's acquisition of reading habits, including family, school, teachers, peer groups, and media tools.*
- *Reading lists play a decisive role in individuals' reading preferences.*

What this study adds on this topic?

- *For the first time, a comparative analysis of teacher and student opinions regarding reading lists and reading habits is conducted among middle school students.*
- *Students emphasize the importance of books providing them with psychological benefits.*
- *Identifying students' emotional needs can enable proper guidance in their reading preferences.*
- *Instead of being given directly, book lists should be organized according to students' interests and needs before being presented to them.*

Abstract

The aim of this study is to comparatively examine the reading habits of middle school students based on the perspectives of both teachers and students, and to develop a recommended reading list tailored for the middle school level. Conducted using a phenomenological design-one of the qualitative research methods-the study involved 34 Turkish language teachers and 83 middle school students as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interview forms and analyzed using content analysis. According to the findings, teachers stated that parental encouragement, expectations of academic achievement, grade anxiety, and homework were influential in directing students toward reading. Students, on the other hand, associated their reading motivation more with emotional reasons, curiosity, and personal interests. Regarding book recommendations, it was found that teachers prioritized pedagogical appropriateness, whereas students emphasized content and structural features. Within the scope of the study, 70 books were recommended by teachers and 51 by students, with 37 books appearing on both lists. It was observed that narrative texts were predominant in the recommendations of both groups. The results of the research indicate that students tend to prefer adventure-themed and engaging books, that regular reading habits significantly contribute to the development of language and communication skills, and that despite technological advancements, printed books remain the primary choice for reading.

Keywords: Book, book list, book recommendation, reading habit reading list

Introduction

Reading, despite being the subject of numerous scientific studies, continues to exist as a mental process that has not been fully understood due to its multi-layered and interdisciplinary nature. Because it has a broad conceptual framework, different aspects of reading come to the fore when it is approached with different definitions; this necessitates evaluating the act of reading as a multidimensional cognitive activity. Indeed, Abejo et al. (2023), Akyol (2014), Grabe and Stoller (2002), Karatay (2023), and Sheeba and Mohd (2018) emphasize the processes of processing, interpreting, and making sense of information. In these definitions, reading is presented as a mental activity that goes beyond recognizing words in a text, enabling the analysis of the layers of meaning behind the words and the construction of structures in the reader's mind that integrate new information. In contrast, Arıcı (2018), Güneş (2007), Johnson (2008), and OECD (2019) define reading as an active process of meaning-making in which the reader engages with the text using their own knowledge base and personal experiences. In this approach, the reader does not settle for the content presented in the text but reconstructs it through the conceptual frameworks in their mind and produces original meanings appropriate to their contextual reality. When both approaches are considered together, reading can be evaluated as a multifaceted and dynamic mental activity that encompasses both the processing and interpretation of the information in the text and the production of meaning through individual experience and schemas. The interaction between these two dimensions is also critically important for the reader's understanding of the text and their ability to engage with it critically and creatively.

The multidimensional nature of reading as a mental activity directly influences not only the meaning relationship established with the text but also the individual's cognitive development, linguistic skills, and cultural background. In this respect, reading is considered a vital action at both the individual and societal levels. The effective use of the four core language skills is crucial in the processes of accessing and structuring information. Among these skills, reading plays a decisive role in the development of both the individual's language proficiency and mental maturity. Said (2023) emphasizes that reading serves to transfer the experiences gained throughout different periods of human history to the individual and that through

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this transfer, the individual can break free from narrow patterns and reach a broad horizon of thought. According to him, the level of development of a civilization is largely related to its reading rate. Johnson (2008) states that through reading, individuals gain the ability to integrate information from the parts to the whole, and that this process develops the individual's ability to interpret. Kim and Anderson (2011) define reading as a high-level key concept that plays a central role in an individual's self-development and brings together many disciplines. Topçu (2013) states that reading and teaching reading are indispensable not only for individual development but also for a cultural and intellectual construction process. According to him, in the human-human dichotomy, it is only possible to become human through reading. In this context, reading gains meaning as a transformative power that serves the individual's process of self-realization, beyond merely acquiring knowledge. Cunningham and Stanovich (2001) reveal that individuals with developed reading skills also have similarly enhanced vocabularies, cognitive capacities, and expressive abilities. Furthermore, reading allows individuals to indirectly experience events, situations, and experiences that they cannot directly experience throughout their lives. In this respect, reading broadens an individual's horizons and increases their intellectual capacity, making them a more conscious social being. The intellectual development of individuals plays a key role in building a prosperous and enlightened society in the long term.

The contributions of reading to individual development and social progress can only be meaningful if this activity becomes a regular, lasting, and internalized habit. Therefore, establishing a reading habit in individuals is a prerequisite for reading to fulfill its true function. Reading finds its true value when it becomes continuous. Therefore, the concept of habit is considered one of the fundamental elements that determine the quality of the act of reading. Ungan (2008) states that reading is primarily a culture, and that this culture can only become established in society over time and through systematic efforts. Indeed, childhood and adolescence are critical thresholds in the construction of a reading culture. It is known that individuals who are introduced to books in the preschool period are at a more advanced level in terms of vocabulary, cognitive development, and emotional awareness compared to their peers who are deprived of this opportunity. Proust (2009) compares reading to Plato's world of ideas, stating that it offers the individual a second realm of existence; he also draws attention to the emotional and psychological healing effects of reading on the individual, stating that he was able to overcome his loneliness in childhood through books. In this sense, reading can be considered an experience that nourishes the individual's inner world and increases their emotional resilience, going beyond a simple process of acquiring knowledge. Many variables play a role in an individual's acquisition of reading habits. The family environment into which the individual is born is at the forefront of these variables. Aküzüm and Bars (2022) and Özdemir Çırakman and Arı (2018) emphasize that the family's positive attitude toward books and reading in early childhood is decisive in the individual's development of reading habits in later periods. In addition to the family, the school (Ketenoğlu Kayabaşı & Özerbaş, 2018), teachers (Ungan, 2008; Ülper, 2011; Ünlü & Eğilmez, 2021), peer groups (Mut & Gelişli, 2021), an individual's book preferences (Bayat & Çetinkaya, 2018), and media tools (Şirin, 2019) also stand out as effective factors in establishing reading habits.

The formation of reading habits in individuals and their transformation into a cultural practice goes beyond being merely an individual or pedagogical issue. Indeed, reading has dynamically changed its form and function throughout history. Although the act of reading has maintained its conceptual continuity throughout history, it has undergone numerous transformations in terms of its tools, purpose, and content. It is known that both Neanderthals and early Homo sapiens in prehistoric times could read the symbols they carved on bone and stone surfaces. However, reading did not occur through any text in the period before the invention of writing. The invention of writing in the fourth millennium BCE (Fischer, 2022) transformed the act of reading into a systematic means of information transfer, but in this early stage, reading remained a limited activity, mostly involving data such as names, numbers, and objects. The massification and spread of reading gained momentum, particularly with the invention of paper in China in 105 CE. This invention first made reading more accessible in East Asia, then in other parts of the world through social movements such as war, migration, and trade (Jack, 2019). With technological developments, reading has evolved from an activity for acquiring knowledge into a matter of preference, orientation, and even identity. In this context, one of the important questions of the modern age is "Which books should be read?" This question has essentially become a multi-layered problem that includes external factors such as media, market, and cultural influences, beyond individual interests. Schopenhauer (2022) criticizes basing a book's value on superficial criteria such as "being read by everyone." He also emphasizes that the act of reading should not be trivialized by the influences of popular culture. According to him, such works are temporary products that create a short-term impact but do not offer long-term intellectual depth, creating nothing more than "noise and commotion." The preference for such books is more a type of "consent engineering" shaped by mass manipulation than a conscious reading activity. The "engineering of consent" conceptualized by Bernays (2021) refers to strategies for directing individuals toward specific ideological, commercial, or cultural goals. Therefore, in the modern era, the reason for choosing a book often stems not from individual will but from media and market-based steering mechanisms. This situation also points to a significant transformation that threatens the qualitative depth of reading.

The historical change in the act of reading has transformed the nature of the individual's relationship with books, along with the way they access information. One of the most obvious effects of this transformation is that reading preferences have become open to media-based steering. One of the fundamental goals of education is to ensure that individuals acquire certain attitudes and behaviors and apply them in their lives. However, achieving this goal is a long-term process, and individuals are exposed to various stimuli throughout this process, especially different stimuli in communication tools. Mass communication tools such as social media, television, and radio have become powerful channels of guidance that influence individuals' reading behavior. Concepts created through these tools, such as "Best Seller," "Booktube," and "Bookstagram," offer individuals popular reading lists; these lists also play a decisive role in individuals' reading preferences (Dölek & Baş, 2024; Ercan & Çıldır, 2024). However, such guidance raises the question of whether the answers to the question "Which book should be read?" are qualitatively sufficient. Indeed, such media-based lists carry the risk of turning books into mere marketing objects, distancing individuals from the process of constructing meaning, which is the essence of the act of reading. In this context, books can transform from a source of knowledge into a consumer object. Every product that becomes a consumer object faces the danger of gradually losing its raison d'être. Indeed, Veblen's (2019) theory of "conspicuous consumption" provides an explanatory framework for this situation. According to him, individuals can also engage in consumption behavior as a sign of social status. The positioning of books in different media channels as symbolic objects that increase an individual's social visibility offers a perspective on how this theory has permeated modern reading culture.

To prevent books from becoming mere consumer items in reading culture, individuals must be guided toward meaningful, high-quality works appropriate to their developmental levels. In this regard, book lists are at the forefront of academic efforts aimed at making the value inherent in books visible and contributing to the development of

individuals' conscious reading preferences. Prepared within a specific discipline and using different methodological approaches, book lists are considered effective practices that encourage students to read, while also attempting to identify high-quality books (Karatay & Dilekçi, 2020). In this regard, numerous book list studies targeting various age groups have been conducted both in Türkiye and in different countries. One of the best-known examples of these studies in Türkiye is the "100 Basic Works" application, which was abolished in 2018 and was prepared separately for primary and secondary education levels. However, in addition to studies on book lists, research examining reader trends, interests, and preferences also exists in the literature. It can be stated that the number of such studies focusing on middle school students is limited. A review of the relevant literature reveals that students in this age group mostly gravitate toward narrative texts in the form of novels and exhibit role modeling behavior, particularly influenced by character development (Şengül Saatçi, 2023; Ünlü & Eğilmez, 2021). Ercan and Çıldır (2024) indicate that middle school children tend to gravitate toward popular books, while Deniz (2015) and Maden and Önal (2020) emphasize that students prefer adventure-type works the most. Furthermore, Yorgancı (2022) reveals that students are more inclined toward printed books than digital resources. Özdemir Çırakman and Arı (2018) state that the peer group and individual orientation of middle school students influence their preferences for domestic and foreign books, and that foreign authors attract more interest. Teachers' book recommendations are determined by the student's age and grade level, area of interest, and suggested book lists (Ünlü & Eğilmez, 2021). Ak Başoğul (2018) states that teachers still refer to the selection of 100 Essential Works most often when determining books.

Various studies have compiled different lists of books recommended for or most read by middle school students. Karagöz (2017) prepared a list of 70 domestic and 30 foreign works based on the opinions of educators and authors. Dündar and Maden (2020) identified the 46 most read works by students; Altuntaş et al. (2020), in their research covering ninth grade students, noted that novels and stories with adventure and entertainment content stood out. The same study also identified the 30 books most recommended by students. Gün et al. (2023) identified 44 works that eighth-grade students should read based on the opinions of Turkish language teachers; it was found that the most recommended genre was novels and that criteria such as student relevance and educational value were prominent among the reasons for recommending the books. Similarly, Batur et al. (2019) identified the top ten most read books for middle school students separately for each grade level and noted that the novel-story genre generally ranked first. Finally, Onur and Topçuoğlu Ünal (2022) listed 117 books for fifthth graders, 131 for sixth graders, 121 for seventh graders, and 118 for eighth graders as works that should be read, based on the opinions of Turkish language teachers.

One important point to note in studies on reading lists is that these lists are not indispensable sources. Every reading list is inherently influenced by the factors that shape it. In this context, the individuals and institutions compiling the list may be influenced by the phenomena of the life they are part of. Although each list essentially aims to transcend these phenomena and reach works of pure aesthetic value, it must be acknowledged that this is not easy. Reading lists should be seen as a proposal that needs to be structured according to time, place, and circumstances, rather than as a panacea that can solve problems everywhere and in every way, as in the exact sciences. The most important task in such a structure falls to teachers, who will make the lists pedagogically functional. This is because reading lists can lose their ability to encourage critical thinking and freedom of reading when they become mere tools for spoon-feeding students with ready-made information. Therefore, both this study and similar studies in literature should be approached with the understanding that lists should be evaluated not as fixed prescriptions but as guides that can be adapted according to context. The main objective of this study is to create a high-quality reading list for middle school students. However, the study is not limited to merely suggesting a list. It also aims to reveal students' reasons for choosing books, the criteria that shape their reading preferences, their preferred reading environments, and the individual gains they derive from regular reading habits. Thus, the study aims to provide a multifaceted assessment of reading culture from both the student and teacher perspectives.

Methods

Research Model

This research is a qualitative study, which is an inquisitive and interpretive approach that aims to understand a phenomenon in depth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Klenke, 2016). This approach is based on natural environments where the problem is directly observed, and participants' experiences are interpreted within their own contexts. Qualitative research attempts to reveal the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon using qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interviews, and document analysis. Focusing on individuals' experiences, perceptions, and worlds of meaning rather than numerical generalizations, qualitative research often reveals previously unnoticed issues (Seale, 1999). This research is designed according to the phenomenology pattern, which is one of the types of qualitative research. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research design that aims to reveal how individuals perceive their experiences, how they assign meaning to these experiences, and how they structure events in their own conscious world. This approach focuses on individuals' subjective experiences and their awareness of these experiences rather than on the external reality of phenomena. The primary goal in this type of research is to deeply examine participants' internal reactions, thoughts, and feelings in response to a specific phenomenon in order to understand its reflection in individual consciousness (Myers, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Working Group

The study group consisted of 34 Turkish language teachers working in schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education and 83 students enrolled in middle school. The "snowball sampling" technique was used to determine the participants. In this technique, individuals who may have knowledge about the problem are identified, and other participants are reached by asking them the question, "Who would be most knowledgeable about this topic?" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In line with this, the study first identified teachers and students who were interested in children's books and had worked in this field and then reached other participants with similar characteristics through these teachers.

Data Collection Tools

In the study, data were collected using an interview form developed by the researchers and consisting of open-ended questions. While preparing the interview forms, subheadings related to the topic to be examined were determined, and questions were created for these headings. The interview form was prepared based on a literature review and then reviewed by three Turkish language education experts, one assessment expert, and one PDR expert. Based on the experts' opinions, it was decided to include five open-ended questions separately for teachers and students.

Data Collection

The prepared interview form was transferred to a digital environment and presented to participants via Google Forms. Data was collected more quickly and systematically in this way. The interview questions were structured specifically for teacher and student groups to correspond with the sub-problems of the research.

Questions directed at students:

Why do you enjoy reading books? Please list your reasons. What criteria do you consider when deciding to read a book?

If you wanted to recommend books for your age group, which books you have read would you recommend? (List them in order of importance.)

What kind of contributions have the books you read made to you? Please give examples. Do you prefer reading books in digital format or in print?

Questions for teachers:

What are your students' reasons for reading books? Please list them. What criteria do you consider when creating a book list for students?

If you were to create a book recommendation list for grades 5–8, which books would you recommend? (Please list them in order of priority.)

What benefits do you think students who read books regularly gain? Please provide examples. Do your students prefer printed books or digital books? How would you explain this?

Validity and Reliability Studies

In qualitative research, validity involves testing the authenticity of the results obtained, while reliability involves evaluating the consistency of the researcher's approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). Guba (1981) proposes the concept of "trustworthiness" instead of validity and reliability in qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1985) explain trustworthiness through the dimensions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Within this framework, the following steps were followed to ensure the reliability of the research:

The processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation were observed and evaluated by experts outside the research.

The researchers took care to eliminate any biases they might have toward the process.

Direct quotations from participants' statements were included to support credibility and transferability.

The themes, codes, and categories obtained were analyzed by multiple experts to assess consistency.

The findings reached as a result of the analysis were presented to experts in the field for approval.

Data Analysis

The data collected within the scope of the research were subjected to descriptive analysis and content analysis. The findings obtained through descriptive analysis were interpreted; in content analysis, concepts and the relationships between these concepts were sought based on the data. In content analysis, similar data were grouped under themes, presented systematically, and interpreted (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Interview responses were broken down into themes, categories, and codes; descriptive frequencies were determined for these codes. During the data analysis process, relationships between themes, categories, and codes were established with the contribution of three subject matter experts, and continuous comparisons were made throughout the analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) mention three types of coding in content analysis: coding according to predetermined concepts, coding according to concepts derived from the data, and coding based on a general framework. In this study, the coding method based on concepts derived from the data was preferred.

Ethics committee approval for this study was obtained from Yıldız TechnicalUniversity (No: 2025.01; Date: January 5, 2025). All participants included in the study provided informed consent for the publication of the data and for participating in this study.

Results

In addition to the main objective of preparing a reading list for middle school students, this study aimed to determine the reasons students read books, the criteria students and teachers consider when deciding which books to read, their views on the benefits of regular reading, and their preferences for digital and printed books. Each question in the research was first subjected to descriptive and content analysis based on the responses provided by students and teachers, then broken down into themes and codes, and finally the responses of students and teachers were compared. The findings related to the first sub-problem of the research are as follows:

Table 1 shows that, according to teachers, students' reasons for reading fall into five categories: external motivation, personal development and skills, interest and curiosity, academic goals, and social and emotional influences. Teachers indicated that among the reasons that motivate students to read books, external motivation sources (encouragement, grade anxiety, homework, social media influence) are in the first place, while social and emotional influences (role modeling, sense of belonging, and peer group) are in the last place. Indeed, T1 (Teacher 1) pointed to both external motivational sources and academic goals, stating, "Encouragement and monitoring by teachers and parents, grade anxiety, thinking it will help with their studies." T8 emphasized that students are directed to read books through role models, stating, "Seeing different types/sizes of books constantly in my hands." T2 mentioned external motivation and influence categories, stating, "They show interest in popular works due to the influence of television and social media and because of a sense of belonging to a place." The fact that the interest and curiosity theme accounted for 29.41% is also a noteworthy finding. Indeed, students' interest and curiosity about reading is extremely important in terms of internalizing the act of reading and turning it into a habit. Findings regarding students' reasons for reading books are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that students' reasons for reading fall into six categories: emotional needs, entertainment and enjoyment, academic development and language skills, personal development, acquiring knowledge

Table 1.
Reasons for Reading Books According to Turkish Teachers

Theme	Category	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Code
Motivation and Development	External motivation	12	35.29	Teacher/parent encouragement, grade anxiety, homework, social media influence
	Personal development and skills	11	32.35	Language skills, critical thinking, imagination, academic achievement
Interests and Goals	Interest and curiosity	10	29.41	Fun, curiosity, desire to learn, hobby
	Academic goals	7	20.59	Test success, reading comprehension, paragraph questions
Social and Emotional Dynamics	Impact	5	14.71	Role modeling, sense of belonging, peer group

Table 2.
Reasons for Reading Books According to Middle School Students

Theme	Category	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Code
Individual and Emotional Factors	Emotional needs	24	28.92	Journey to other worlds, peace, stress relief, emotional relaxation
	Fun and enjoyment	23	27.71	Adventure, fun, enjoyment, having a good time
Personal Gains	Academic development and language skills	22	26.51	Vocabulary, reading speed, exam success, analytical thinking
	Personal development	18	21.69	Imagination, empathy, different perspectives, self-confidence
Intellectual Development	Acquiring knowledge and curiosity	16	19.28	New information, cultural knowledge, satisfying curiosity
Activity	Time management and productivity	9	10.84	Leisure time evaluation, relieving boredom

and curiosity, and time management and productivity. Among the reasons that motivate students to read books, emotional needs (journeying to other worlds, peace, stress relief, emotional relaxation) rank first, while the category of time management and productivity (using free time, alleviating boredom) is ranked last. Indeed, S(Student) 48 stated, "I feel like I'm in another universe, it gives me peace," and S81 stated, "It calms me down when I'm stressed," pointing to emotional relief. S22 emphasized turning to books for academic and linguistic development, stating, "I solve exam questions faster," and S54 stated, "My vocabulary is improving."

When comparing teachers' and students' views on the reasons for reading books, teachers cited external motivational sources first, while students cited emotional needs. According to both students and teachers, developing academic skills and gaining proficiency in language and thought are among the important reasons for reading books. Teachers emphasized social interactions (role modeling, book recommendations) as reasons for reading, while students did not mention this aspect. Another noteworthy point is that the purpose of "enjoyment" stands out among students' reasons for reading books.

Table 3 shows that teachers' criteria for selecting books for students consist of developmental appropriateness, student interest, content quality, values education, creativity and thinking, and social criteria. Among the criteria for selecting books for students, teachers consider developmental appropriateness (age, grade level, pedagogical suitability) the most important and social and economic principles (MEB approval, 100 basic works, economic accessibility) the least important. Indeed, T23 emphasized the principle of student-centeredness by stating, "Age, comprehension ability, style," and T32 stated, "Development level, emotional and intellectual world." T27: "I take care to give from the 100 basic works" and T54: "According to book prices" express that they take social and economic criteria into account. The findings regarding students' book selection criteria are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that students' criteria for selecting books consist of content and genre, author and narrative style, structural features, visual appeal, age level, educational and personal benefits, recommendations and external influences, and emotional reasons. When choosing books, students pay the most attention to content and genre (adventure, science fiction, biography, detective, comedy) and the least to author and style (author's style, author's recognition, fluent language). Indeed, S52: "Adventure books are more beautiful than others" and S63: "Science fiction and space topics interest me" refer to the importance of content and genre. S78 emphasized the importance of book visuals, stating, "I attach great importance to the book cover; the cover photo must draw me in. If the cover photo is beautiful, my interest in the book increases," while S81 expressed the emotional connection in book selection, saying,

"The book should take me to different worlds." It is noteworthy that genre and structural characteristics are dominant among students' book selection criteria. When examining the criteria for selecting books among teachers and students, it is seen that both groups emphasize content and age level. However, the functionality of the criterion of selecting books according to age level among students is an important issue that needs to be examined. It can be stated that students focus more on

Table 3.
Criteria for Book Selection by Turkish Language Teachers

Theme	Category	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Code
Relevance to Students	Developmental appropriateness	20	58.82	Age, grade level, pedagogical appropriateness
Interest and Needs	Student interest	14	41.18	Entertainment, appeal, areas of interest
Work Quality	Content quality	12	35.29	Literary value, classic/contemporary works, qualified authors
Educational Goals	Values education	10	29.41	National-spiritual values, ethics, universal messages
	Creativity and thought	9	26.47	Imagination, empathy, critical thinking
Economic and Social Principles	Social criteria	8	23.53	MEB approval, 100 essential works, economic accessibility

Table 4.
Middle School Students' Book Selection Criteria

Theme	Category	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Code
Content and Presentation	Content and type	32	38.55	Adventure, science fiction, biography, crime, comedy
	Author and narration	10	12.05	The author's style, the author's recognition, fluent language
Physical Characteristics	Structural characteristics	28	33.73	Number of pages, font type, thickness, with or without pictures
	Visual appeal	18	21.69	Cover design, color pages, eye- catching title
Target Audience	Age level	21	25.30	Age appropriateness, pedagogical suitability
	Educational and personal benefit	14	16.87	Knowledge acquisition, perspective building, teaching
Social and Emotional Dynamics	Recommendations and external influences	15	18.07	Teacher/friend recommendations, film/TV adaptations
	Emotional reasons	12	14.46	Daydreaming, identifying with characters, captivating nature

Table 5.
Recommended Book List for Middle School Students by Turkish Language Teachers

Rank	Book Title	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Author
1	Yürek Dede ile Padişah	11	32.35	Cahit Zarifoğlu
2	Yıldız Tozu	8	23.52	Mustafa Kutlu
3	Dedemin Bakkalı	7	20.58	Şermin Yaşar
4	Dede Korkut Hikayeleri	7	20.58	Ayşe Sevim
5	Küçük Prens	6	17.64	Antoine De Saint Exupery
6	Şeker Portakalı	6	17.64	Jose Mauro De Vasconcelos
7	Bunun Adı Findel	6	17.64	Andrew Clements
8	Türkçenin Muhafızları	6	17.64	Özgür Aras Tüfek
9	Pal Sokağı Çocukları	5	14.7	Ferenc Molnar
10	Hafıza Koleksiyoncusu	5	14.7	Kayahan Demir
11	Rüzgârı Dizginleyen Çocuk	5	14.7	William Kamkwamba
12	Beyaz Gemi	5	14.7	Cengiz Aytmatov
13	Charlie'nin Çikolata Fabrikası	5	14.7	Roald Dahl
14	Gülücük	5	14.7	Cahit Zarifoğlu
15	Hayal Sözleşmesi	5	14.7	Dilek Yardımcı
16	Çatıdaki Gezegen	4	11.76	Behiç Ak
17	Cingöz Recai	4	11.76	Peyami Safa
18	Yuan Huan'ın Kulübesi	4	11.76	Miyase Sertbarut
19	İçimdeki Müzik	4	11.76	Sharon M.Draper
20	İnsan Ne ile Yaşar	4	11.76	Tolstoy
21	Ağaçkakanlar	4	11.76	Cahit Zarifoğlu
22	Masal Masal İçinde	4	11.76	Ahmet Ümit
23	Abartma Tozu	4	11.76	Şermin Yaşar
24	Ölümsüz Aile	4	11.76	Natalie Babbitt
25	Küçük Şehzade	4	11.76	Cahit Zarifoğlu
26	Para Ağacı	4	11.76	Şermin Yaşar
27	Göğü Yere İndirelim	4	11.76	Özgür Balpınar
28	Uçan Sınıf	4	11.76	Erich Kastner
29	Çocuk Kalbi	4	11.76	Edmondo De Amics
30	Ayasofya'da Bir Gece	4	11.76	Rana Demiriz
31	Enno ya da Asfalttaki Karahindiba	4	11.76	Astrid Frank
32	Kiraz Ağacı ile Aramızdaki Mesafe	4	11.76	Paola Peretti
33	Âkif Dede	4	11.76	Vehbi Vakkasoğlu
34	Kılçık Uçurtma	4	11.76	Handan Durgut
35	Çözüm Bakanlığı	4	11.76	Sanne Rosseboom
36	İbn Tufeyl ile Akıl Adasında Bir Başına	4	11.76	Özkan Öze
37	Dört Sonsuz Evren	4	11.76	Ahmet Melih Karauğuz
38	Kraliçeyi Kurtarmak	4	11.76	Vladimir Tumanov
39	Uçurtmam Bulut Şimdi	3	8.82	Sevim Ak
40	Özgürlük ve Adalet Savaşçısı Aliya	3	8.82	Meryem Uçar
41	Sadako	3	8.82	Eleanor Coerr
42	Süper Gazeteciler	3	8.82	Aytül Akal
43	Sel	3	8.82	Yavuz Bahadıroğlu
44	Yıldız Parlatan	3	8.82	Şükran Binark
45	Masal Kaçkını	3	8.82	Nehir Aydın Gökduman
46	Duvarın Ardı	3	8.82	Tuğba Coşkuner
47	Saatler Durduğunda Filozoflar Ne Yapar	3	8.82	Ayşe Nur Biçer
48	Kurtubalı Lübna	3	8.82	Elif Akardaş
49	Çöplük	3	8.82	Andy Mulligan
50	Malamender	3	8.82	Thomas Taylor
51	Çaylak ile Filozof	3	8.82	Özkan Öze
52	Bir Küçük Osmancık Vardı	3	8.82	Hasan Nail Canat
53	Auden Dare'nin Sıra Dışı Renkleri	3	8.82	Zillah Bethell
54	Haritada Kaybolmak	3	8.82	Vladimir Tumanov
55	Şimugula	3	8.82	Sevgi Saygı
56	Zerdali/ Dedemle Bir Yıl	3	8.82	Yaşar Bayraktar
57	Martı Jonathan Livingston	3	8.82	Richard Bach
58	Kadim Şehrin Şifreleri	3	8.82	Almila Aydın
59	İyilik Timi	3	8.82	Metin Özdamarlar
60	Harita Koruyucuları	3	8.82	Esra Bahadır Cesar
61	Yeşil Ada'nın Çocukları	3	8.82	Havva Tekin
62	Masalistanbul	3	8.82	Figen Yaman Coşar
63	Bir Pekin Ördeğinin Tam 15 Yıl 5 Ay Süren Yolculuğu	3	8.82	Vassilis Papatheodorou
64	Endülüste Bir Hafta	3	8.82	Rana Demiriz
65	Evliya'nın Sırları	3	8.82	Abdullah Harmancı
66	Türk İkizleri	3	8.82	Cahit Uçuk
67	Dolunay Dedektifleri	3	8.82	Mavisel Yener
68	Ballı Çörek Kafetaryası	3	8.82	Zeynep Cemali
69	Seksen Günde Devri Alem	3	8.82	Jules Verne
70	Filanca Operasyon	3	8.82	Feyza Şahin

the genre in book content, while teachers focus on the quality of the work. Again, while teachers emphasize the attractiveness of the work's content, students associate attractiveness more with visual elements. It is noteworthy that while the physical and structural characteristics of the book are almost absent among teachers' book selection criteria, students attach importance to this issue.

Table 5 shows that Turkish teachers recommended 70 different books. Thirty-two books on the list were recommended three times, while 38 books were recommended more than three times. In this context, it can be said that the teachers' recommendations show diversity. Forty-six of the books belong to Turkish literature, 23 to world literature, and one to the literature of the Turkic world. Sixty-two different authors are included in the recommendation list. While more than one book by five recommended authors is included in the list, it is noteworthy that four of these authors are local and one is foreign. The books on the teachers' recommendation list are predominantly novels/short stories, and the list also includes some books from the selection of 100 essential works that the Ministry of National Education removed from use in 2018. The list of books recommended by students for middle school students in their own age group is given in Table 6.

Table 6.
Students' Recommended Books

Rank	Book Title	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Author
1	Abartma Tozu	14	16.86	Şermin Yaşar
2	Yürek Dede ile Padişah	13	15.66	Cahit Zarifoğlu
3	Şeker Portakalı	13	15.66	Jose Mauro De Vasconcelos
4	Charlie'nin Çikolata Fabrikası	11	13.25	Roald Dahl
5	Küçük Prens	10	12.04	Antoine De Saint Exupery
6	Çatıdaki Gezegen	9	10.84	Behiç Ak
7	Türkçenin Muhafızları	9	10.84	Özgür Aras Tüfek
8	Kırık Çömlek Parçası	8	9.63	Linda Sue Park
9	Dede Korkut Hikayeleri	8	9.63	Ayşe Sevim
10	Çocuk Kalbi	8	9.63	Edmondo De Amicis
11	Pal Sokağı Çocukları	8	9.63	Ferenc Molnar
12	Kiraz Ağacı ile Aramızdaki Mesafe	7	8.43	Paola Peretti
13	Yankılı Kayalar	7	8.43	Ahmet Yılmaz Boyunağa
14	Kraliçeyi Kurtarmak	7	8.43	Vladimir Tumanov
15	Göğü Yere İndirelim	7	8.43	Özgür Balpınar
16	Kılçık Uçurtma	7	8.43	Handan Turgut
17	Çorba Dayanışması	6	7.22	Ben Davis
18	Sadako	6	7.22	Eleanor Coerr
19	Zaman Bisikleti	6	7.22	Bilgin Adalı
20	Çakma Öğrenci	5	6.02	Fatma Çağdaş Börekçi
21	Hachiko	5	6.02	Leslea Newman
22	Uçurtmam Bulut Şimdi	5	6.02	Sevim Ak
23	Dedemin Bakkalı	4	4.81	Şermin Yaşar
24	Zaman Kapısı	4	4.81	Pierdomenico Baccalario
25	Bunun Adı Findel	4	4.81	Andrew Clements
26	Yıldız Tozu	4	4.81	Mustafa Kutlu
27	Küçük Şehzade	4	4.81	Cahit Zarifoğlu
28	Ayasofya'da Bir Gece	4	4.81	Rana Demiriz
29	Süper Gazeteciler	4	4.81	Aytül Akal
30	Malamender	4	4.81	Thomas Toylor
31	Uçan Sınıf	4	4.81	Erich Kastner
32	Masalistanbul	4	4.81	Figen Yaman Coşar
33	Zerdali/Dedemle Bir Yıl	4	4.81	Yaşar Bayraktar
34	Harita Koruyucuları	4	4.81	Esra Bahadır Cesar
35	Bülbülün Kırk Şarkısı	3	3.61	İskender Pala
36	Cingöz Recai	3	3.61	Peyami Safa
37	Çözüm Bakanlığı	3	3.61	Sanne Rosseboom
38	Buz Çetesi	3	3.61	Yücel Öztürk
39	Lataşiba	3	3.61	İrem Uşar
40	Çaylak ile Filozof	3	3.61	Özkan Öze
41	Kiraz Tepesindeki Mucize	3	3.61	Sun-Mi Hwang
42	Dört Sonsuz Evren	3	3.61	Ahmet Melih Karauğuz
43	Ölümsüz Aile	3	3.61	Natalie Babbitt
44	Şu Acayip Serisi	3	3.61	Tarık Uslu
45	İnsan Ne ile Yaşar	3	3.61	Tolstoy
46	Duvarın Ardı	3	3.61	Tuğba Coşkuner
47	Evliya'nın Sırları	3	3.61	Abdullah Harmancı
48	Dolunay Dedektifleri	3	3.61	Mavisel Yener
49	Okuma Bilmeyen Kitapçı	3	3.61	Sylvia Bishop
50	Yaşasın Ç Harfi Kardeşliği	3	3.61	Behiç Ak
51	Hayal Sözleşmesi	3	3.61	Dilek Yardımcı

Table 6 shows that middle school students recommended 51 different books. Seventeen books on the list were recommended at least three times, while 34 books were recommended more than three times. In this context, it can be said that the students' recommendations show diversity similar to that of the teachers. Thirty-one of the books belong to Turkish literature, and 20 belong to world literature. Forty-eight different authors are included in the recommendation list. While more than one book by three recommended authors is included in the list, all of these authors are local. The books on the students' recommendation list are also predominantly novels/short stories, and it is possible to state that the list again contains works common to the selection of 100 fundamental works that the Ministry of National Education removed from use in 2018. When comparing the recommendation lists of teachers and students, the list of books that appear in both groups is given in Table 7.

Table 7 shows that 37 works are common to both Turkish teachers' and middle school students' recommended book lists. Of the books on the common recommendation list, 23 belong to Turkish literature and 14 to world literature. While there are 35 different authors on the list, two authors have more than one book recommended by both students and teachers. Both authors with multiple recommended books are from Turkish literature. Like other lists, the joint recommendation list of teachers and students contains works common to the MEB 100 Basic Works list. Findings regarding the benefits of Turkish teachers' regular book reading habit for middle school students are presented in Table 8.

Table 8 shows that, according to Turkish language teachers, regular reading habits promote the development of oral and written expression, metacognitive and strategic thinking, emotional awareness and social skills, increase academic motivation and exam success, offer innovative and aesthetic perspectives, and contribute to intellectual awareness and character development. According to Turkish teachers, the most important benefit of reading books is that it develops the student's ability to express themselves in writing and verbally. Indeed, T30: "Expansion of vocabulary and improvement in speaking skills" and T33: "Practicality in sentence construction and meaningful expressions" refer to the development of verbal and written expression. T2: "I can see that their empathy skills have developed" emphasizes social and emotional development, while T18: "Culture, intellectual foundation," K8: "It creates intellectual pleasure in students," and T23: "They become well-behaved, respected, and listened-to people" express the impact on intellectual development and character formation. The findings regarding middle school students' views on the benefits of regular book reading habits are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 shows that, compared to middle school students, regular reading habits improve verbal and written expression, increase exam success, develop metacognitive and analytical skills, create self-awareness, and provide psychological benefits through cultural awareness and value transfer. Students stated that the most important benefit of regular reading, like their Turkish teachers, was the development of written and verbal expression skills. Indeed, S28 said, "It improved my

Table 7.
Common Works on the Recommendation Lists of Turkish Language Teachers and Middle School Students

Rank	Book Title	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Author
1	Yürek Dede ile Padişah	24	20.51	Cahit Zarifoğlu
2	Şeker Portakalı	19	16.23	Jose Mauro De Vasconcelos
3	Abartma Tozu	18	15.38	Şermin Yaşar
4	Charlie'nin Çikolata Fabrikası	16	13.67	Roald Dahl
5	Küçük Prens	16	13.67	Antoine De Saint Exupery
6	Türkçenin Muhafızları	15	12.82	Özgür Aras Tüfek
7	Dede Korkut Hikayeleri	15	12.82	Ayşe Sevim
8	Çatıdaki Gezegen	13	11.11	Behiç Ak
9	Pal Sokağı Çocukları	13	11.11	Ferenc Molnar
10	Çocuk Kalbi	12	10.25	Edmondo De Amicis
11	Yıldız Tozu	12	10.25	Mustafa Kutlu
12	Kraliçeyi Kurtarmak	11	9.4	Vladimir Tumanov
13	Göğü Yere İndirelim	11	9.4	Özgür Balpınar
14	Kılçık Uçurtma	11	9.4	Handan Turgut
15	Dedemin Bakkalı	11	9.4	Şermin Yaşar
16	Kiraz Ağacı ile Aramızdaki Mesafe	11	9.4	Paola Peretti
17	Bunun Adı Findel	10	8.54	Andrew Clements
18	Sadako	9	7.69	Eleanor Coerr
19	Uçurtmam Bulut Şimdi	8	6.83	Sevim Ak
20	Küçük Şehzade	8	6.83	Cahit Zarifoğlu
21	Ayasofya'da Bir Gece	8	6.83	Rana Demiriz
22	Uçan Sınıf	8	6.83	Erich Kastner
23	Hayal Sözleşmesi	8	6.83	Dilek Yardımcı
24	Süper Gazeteciler	7	5.98	Aytül Akal
25	Malamender	7	5.98	Thomas Toylor
26	Masalistanbul	7	5.98	Figen Yaman Coşar
27	Zerdali/Dedemle Bir Yıl	7	5.98	Yaşar Bayraktar
28	Harita Koruyucuları	7	5.98	Esra Bahadır Cesar
29	Cingöz Recai	7	5.98	Peyami Safa
30	Çözüm Bakanlığı	7	5.98	Sanne Rosseboom
31	Dört Sonsuz Evren	7	5.98	Ahmet Melih Karauğuz
32	Ölümsüz Aile	7	5.98	Natalie Babbitt
33	İnsan Ne ile Yaşar	7	5.98	Tolstoy
34	Çaylak ile Filozof	6	5.12	Özkan Öze
35	Duvarın Ardı	6	5.12	Tuğba Coşkuner
36	Evliya'nın Sırları	6	5.12	Abdullah Harmancı
37	Dolunay Dedektifleri	6	5.12	Mavisel Yener

reading, enabled me to read faster, and helped me speak better," and S25 said, "Practicality in sentence construction and meaningful expressions," referring to the development of verbal and written expression. S83 emphasized academic achievement and self-discipline, stating, "It helped me organize my lessons. Reading books at specific times each day helped me focus more on my lessons and was effective in improving my grades," while S19 drew attention to communication and social aspects, stating, "I gained respect and became popular among my friends."

When considering the views of teachers and students on the benefits of regular reading, the most important point emphasized by both groups is the development of oral and written expression. In addition, benefits such as academic success, cognitive development, and intellectual development are mentioned by both the teacher and student groups. It is noteworthy that while students emphasized the psychological benefits of books, such as stress relief and relaxation, teachers did not address this point. Students stated that books entertained them and that they enjoyed reading. Teachers, on the other hand, did not mention any themes in the category of enjoyment and entertainment. Although both groups generally mentioned similar benefits, it can be said that teachers emphasized pedagogical needs more, while students prioritized personal needs. Findings from Turkish teachers and students regarding whether students preferred digital or printed books are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 shows that regarding students' preferences for accessing books, 82.35% of teachers stated that they preferred printed books, 14.71% prefer digital books, and 2.94% prefer both types of books; while 84.34% of students prefer printed books, 8.43% prefer both types, and 7.23% prefer digital books. In this regard, it can be stated that the opinions of teachers and students are consistent within themselves. Teachers believe that students are turning to digital books due to reasons such as familiarity with technology, the influence of social media, and cost. Students, on the other hand, stated that they prefer digital books because of cost and ease of access. Teachers believe that students' preference for printed books is mainly due to their desire for physical interaction with books, the distracting nature of digital environments, parents' book habits, regional infrastructure problems, and emotional attachment. While citing these reasons, students also stated that they prefer printed books to protect their eyesight. Indeed, T19: "My observation is that they prefer printed books. The reason is that most of my students have limited screen time. That is, parents do not allow it," linked the preference for printed books to parental culture, while T29: "Digital books are free and easily accessible," pointed to cost and accessibility in the preference for digital books.

Discussion

Within the scope of the research, middle school students' reasons for reading books, the criteria they consider when selecting books, the individual benefits provided by books, and their preferred reading environments were identified; based on the recommendations of teachers and students, a book list was compiled. The study found that Turkish language teachers stated that students read books mostly for external motivation and least for social and emotional reasons. Students also indicated emotional needs and pleasure as the most common reasons for reading books, while managing time and striving to use it more efficiently were the least common reasons. In this context, it can be emphasized that identifying students' emotional needs is quite important. Indeed, teachers cited external motivation as the primary reason, but students' emotional needs should be highlighted in this external motivation. Teachers, on the other hand, cited teacher/parent encouragement, grade anxiety, homework, and the influence of social media as sources of external motivation.

The primary criterion teachers use when recommending books to students is pedagogical suitability. It has been determined that content, genre, and structural characteristics are prominent in students' criteria for selecting books. Teachers still view the "100 Basic Works" list, which was removed from use in 2018, as a criterion. This situation also points to the importance of book list studies. While both teachers and students consider interests and goals in their book selection criteria, student needs are not included among the teacher criteria. Teachers need to focus on identifying students' emotional needs and using books for "bibliotherapy" purposes. Age appropriateness, which is among the students' book selection criteria, is an important point that needs to be examined. This is because, when the other criteria determined

Table 8.
Benefits of Regular Book Reading Habits According to Turkish Teachers

Theme	Category	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Code
Language and Communication Skills	Oral and written expression	28	82.35	Fluency in reading/speaking, vocabulary, self-expression
Cognitive Development	Metacognitive skill acquisition Strategic thinking	25	73.53	Reading comprehension, critical thinking, quick comprehension
Social- Emotional Development	Emotional awareness Social skills and adaptation	19	55.88	Empathy, self-confidence, social relationships, mature behavior
Academic Achievement	Academic motivation Test success	11	32.35	Test performance, school success, writing skills
Creativity and Imagination	Innovative thinking Aesthetic perspective	10	29.41	Rich imagination, different perspectives
General Culture and Awareness	Intellectual awareness Character formation	6	17.65	Social consciousness, cultural heritage, perspective on life

by students are considered, it can be argued that the criterion of age appropriateness is associated with visual elements, while criteria such as value and aesthetics are not taken into account. In this context, in addition to recommending books to students, teachers should conduct activities and exercises related to the content and aesthetic values that books should possess.

The books on the recommendation lists of teachers and students are diverse but generally consist of adventure and entertainment genres based on plot. While teachers recommend 70 different books, 65.71% of these books belong to Turkish literature, 32.85% to world literature, and 1.42% to Turkish world literature. There are 51 different books on the students' recommendation list, of which 60.79% belong to Turkish literature and 39.21% to world literature. There are 62 different authors on the teacher list and 48 different authors on the student list. It is possible to state that both participant groups have a high diversity of authors. Among these authors, Cahit Zarifoğlu, Vladimir Tumanov, and Şermin Yaşar stand out as frequently recurring authors. Takır (2023), who examined the books by Cahit Zarifoğlu, who has the most books on the list, stated that these books carry many educational values such as being curious, patient, questioning, and researching. Erkmen (2017) emphasized that Vladimir Tumanov's book "Kraliçeyi Kurtarmak" (Saving the Queen), which is on the list, is among the most read books, while Arslan (2021) stating that the author's relevant works reveal children's curious and investigative sides and reflect children's reality. Hançerlioğlu (2024) stated that Şermin Yaşar's children's books convey many educational messages such as empathy, solution-oriented thinking, self-confidence, curiosity, and problem-solving. When the students' reasons for reading books, the benefits they gain from books, and the books they recommend are interpreted together in the study, it can be stated that students develop their reading tendencies based on these values. The teacher, student, and shared book lists that emerged in the research are similar to the book lists that emerged in the studies by Batur et al. (2019), Karagöz (2017), Saatçi Şengül (2023), Onur and Ünal (2022), and Özdemir Çırakman and Arı (2018).

About 82.35% of teachers stated that books benefit students' language and communication skills, such as fluent reading, speaking, vocabulary, and self-expression. Students also cited the development of language and communication skills as the primary benefit of books. This indicates that reading is not only an academic activity but also an

Table 9.
Benefits of Regular Book Reading Habits for Middle School Students According to the Students Themselves

Theme	Category	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Code
Language and Communication Skills	Oral and written expression	34	40.96	Vocabulary, reading speed, pronunciation, writing skills
Academic Achievement	Exam success Self-regulation	23	27.71	Exam performance, reading comprehension, focus in class, planning
Cognitive Development	Metacognitive skill acquisition Analytical skills	21	25.30	Critical thinking, problem-solving, memory development
Social-Emotional Development	Emotional awareness Communication and socialization	19	22.89	Empathy, self-confidence, communication skills, emotional intelligence
Personal Development and Culture	Cultural awareness Values and attitudes	17	20.48	Historical knowledge, general knowledge, different perspectives
Emotional Benefit and Entertainment	Stress and time management Psychological relaxation	15	18.07	Stress relief, enjoyment, time management, motivation

Table 10.
Findings Regarding Access to Books

Participant	Preference	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Reasons
Teacher	Digital	5	14.71	Familiarity with technology, social media influence, free access
	Print	28	82.35	Physical interaction, distraction, parental culture, regional access, emotional connection
	Mixed	1	2.94	Habit of using both
Student	Digital	6	7.23	Cost, accessibility, practicality
	Print	70	84.34	Physical interaction, eye health, emotional connection, the smell of books
	Mixed	7	8.43	Situational preference (based on cost/feeling)

important skill for personal and social development. Both teachers and students believe that books provide significant benefits in cognitive, social, emotional, and academic terms. Furthermore, while students mentioned that books are beneficial in terms of psychological relaxation and stress reduction, teachers did not mention this. Considering the criteria that students and teachers use as a basis for selecting books, it can be said that a similar result to the situation in the criteria emerges here. Teachers' awareness needs to be increased, especially through studies in this direction. About 82.35% of teachers and 84.34% of students prefer printed media for accessing books. The emergence of options for accessing books with the increase in digital opportunities has not led to a significant change in the environments in which teachers and students access books. It can be stated that this result of the research is in line with Yorgancı (2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Acquiring reading habits and incorporating books into students' lives from an early age ensures that they gain many qualities. In this respect, bringing students together with quality books has a broad purpose that is not limited to educational environments. Book lists are one of the effective methods used to achieve this goal. However, it should be noted that not every book list is a goal in itself. Book lists generally serve as a proposal for their target audience. Educators should use this proposal, presented as a list, as a tool to guide readers "from novice to expert." In such a reading process, the most fundamental role of teachers should be to guide students in their reading. The "intellectual reading framework" constructed under the guidance of the teacher will make the different reading lists offered as suggestions effective. Otherwise, the absolute nature of reading lists may prevent the process from ultimately producing "independent readers." The intellectual reading scaffold refers to the method used in the process of turning an individual into an independent expert reader based on their interests and needs. Furthermore, it is also important to diversify reading lists for different professional groups, such as organizing them according to education and training levels. In this sense, it is necessary to conduct research on reading lists for different social and professional groups.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings o f this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Informed Consent: Written informed consent was obtained from participants who participated in this study.

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