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The Views of Students in History Department About "The Misuses of History"

Tarih Bölümü Öğrencilerinin "Tarihin Kötü Amaçlı Kullanımı" Hakkındaki Görüşleri

Ramazan KAYA[1]

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the views of students who are both historian candidates and pre-service teachers about the use and misuse of history. The research study was carried out with qualitative research method and basic qualitative research design. The population of the study consisted of students studying in their final year of bachelor's studies in the Department of History and taking pedagogical formation training at Ataturk University Faculty of Letters in 2014-2015 academic year. While composing the study group, convenience sampling method was adopted. The data were collected via open-ended questionnaire and analysed via content analysis. Considering the findings yielded, the participants pointed out that the most important reason for different and opposite interpretations about a historical character in the case of Sultan Abdülhamit II were not being objective. All of the participants determined that history could be misused. The participants' views on the ways of misuses of history could be listed as follows: using past for political purposes, discrediting historical figures and personalities with false information, the ideological description of the past, and the distortion of the past via mass media. When the participants' views about how to raise students' awareness about the use and misuse of history are examined, the emphasis on objectivity stands out. The participants suggested that students should be taught history objectively and they should view history objectively. The other top views stated by the participants are listed as follows: raising student awareness about the misuse of history and its damages, encouraging them to do research, guiding them to true and realistic sources, suggesting students that each event should be evaluated considering the conditions of the period under which it was experienced and benefiting from different sources. It was revealed in the research study that the participants partially had a command of historical methodology and they were not qualified enough about the misuses of history. Pre-service teachers should be provided with the best training about how history could be misused and how students can be made aware of it.

Key Words: history education, historian candidate, pre-service history teacher, objectivity, historical methodology, the misuse of history

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, hem tarihçi hem de tarih öğretmeni adayı olan öğrencilerin, tarihin kötüye kullanımı hakkındaki görüşlerini tespit etmektir. Araştırma nitel araştırma yöntemi ile ve temel nitel araştırma deseni ile yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, 2014-2015 eğitim öğretim yılında, Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, Tarih bölümü son sınıfta okuyan ve aynı zamanda pedagojik formasyon eğitimi alan öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma grubunun belirlenmesinde kolay ulaşılabilir durum örneklemesi benimsenmiştir. Veriler, açık uçlu anket formu ile toplanmış ve içerik analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre katılımcılar, II. Abdülhamit örneğinde bir tarihsel karakter hakkında yapılan farklı ve zıt yorumların en önemli sebebi olarak objektif olamamayı göstermişlerdir. Katılımcıların hepsi tarihin kötüye kullanılabileceğini belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcıların tarihin kötüye kullanılma biçimleri hakkındaki görüşleri; geçmişin siyasal amaçlar için kullanılması, tarihi kişiliklerin yanlış bilgilerle kötülenmesi, geçmişin ideolojik olarak anlatılması, geçmişin medya yoluyla çarpıtılması şeklinde sıralanmaktadır. Katılımcıların, öğrencilerin tarihin kötüye kullanımları konusunda nasıl bilinçlendirilebileceği hakkındaki görüşleri incelendiğinde objektiflik vurgusu ön plana çıkmaktadır. Katılımcılar, öğrencilere tarihin objektif bir şekilde anlatılmasını ve onların da tarihe objektif bakmalarının sağlanmasını önermişlerdir. Katılımcılar tarafından dile getirilen üst sıralardaki diğer görüşler; öğrencileri tarihin kötüye kullanımı ve bunun zararları konusunda bilinçlendirme, araştırmaya sevk etme, doğru ve gerçekçi kaynaklara yönlendirme, öğrencilere her olayın yaşandığı dönemin şartlarına göre değerlendirilmesini önerme ile farklı kaynaklardan yararlanılmasını önerme şeklindedir. Araştırmada katılımcıların tarih metodolojisine kısmen hâkim olduğu ve tarihin kötüye kullanımı konusunda yeterince donanımlı olmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarının tarihin nasıl kötüye kullanılabileceğine ve buna karşılık öğrencilerinin nasıl bilinçlendirilebileceğine yönelik iyi bir eğitim almaları sağlanmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: tarih öğretimi, tarihçi adayı, tarih öğretmen adayı, objektiflik, tarih metodolojisi, tarihin kötüye kullanımı

1. Atatürk Üniversitesi, KKEF Türkçe ve Sosyal Bilimler Eğitimi Bölümü, Erzurum, Türkiye; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9481-2450

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1. Introduction

History is an important source which people refer to with many reasonable justifications such as understanding today, gaining experiences about the problems they lived or will live and which they benefit from. However, history has not been referred to for only good intentions or right purposes. History has been used and distorted for the interests of many people and institutions both in the form of production and in the form of presentation inside and outside the education system.

Parenti (2004) is one of the researchers who pointed out that history has been misused by the way of production and presentation. Parenti (2004, pp. 9-14) notes that the literary history and the history taught in schools are mostly created by the sovereigns and reflect and strengthen their position and interests, rather than the facts. It deals with how ordinary people, Third World people, and women are excluded from the history and the prejudices and the contemptuous point of view formed on the rest of the world by the European-centred history. Moreover, he points out that the dominant view is assessed as a subjective, reasonable, and absolute truth and this point of view is developed with repetitions which are away from the criticism by the communication and education systems. As understood from Parenti's statements, benefiting from the question of objectivity for the misuse of history draws attention.

Iggers (2003) is one of those who states that history is misused over the question of objectivity and he connects this situation with the modern point of view. According to Iggers the modern perspective whose roots go back to the Enlightenment and which dominated the historical thinking up to the second half of the 20th century is based on the assumption that *historical process follows a line, is continuous, and can be understood with an objective and scientific approach* (Iggers, 2003, pp. 1-2). The first assumption was ethnicity centred and it gave validity to the supremacy of Western civilization and bore the first signs of racism and colonialist attitudes. The second assumption put emphasis on neutrality and objectivity. However, historians could not stand aside as it was with the 19th century national literary history and also they reflected the view points and values of the institutions they worked for and the class they belonged to. In fact, even today historians are not able to behave independently of the conditions of the era and the society they live in. This second assumption, that is, *objectivity and being scientific have become a shield that conceals the ideological assumptions underlying this claim* (Iggers, 2003, pp. 3-8). Lowenthal (2003, p. 39) states that misinterpretations of history have spread and settled in the minds, so it is not easy to change them, and adds that it is forgotten that the past has been rarely written in an objective and neutral way.

One of the most common misuses of history was realized particularly in line with the ethnocentric and nationalistic intentions during the foundation of nation states in the 19th century. Within the framework of nationalistic intentions, identity formation was based on myths looking like history rather than historical research. This history intended for national identity and awareness composed of *chronological inconsistency* (*anachronism), contextlessness, omission*, *and extreme lying* (Hobsbawm, 2001, p. 77). As identified by Stradling (2003a, pp. 120-121), *in the process of activating the nation consciousness ... instead of the periods of peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation, the emphasis is put on the conflicts, which emphasize glorious victories and causes the feelings of fear, defence and hatred to persist ".* Hence, the misuse of history for national identity has been one of the most important issues discussed and addressed as a problem in the studies intended for establishing peace for a long time. As a matter of fact, after the First and Second World War, first, the League of Nations and then the United Nations took action on revising the textbooks to use them as a tool of peace rather than being a historical battlefield. Bilateral agreements have been made in the textbooks for removing prejudices against other identities and the feelings of vengeance and numerous conferences have been organized (Safran and Ata, 2006, pp. 61-62). As stated by Donnelly and Norton (2011, pp. 120-121) "*the misuse of history for the nationalistic purposes can be observed with the foundation of the national archives, museums, and monuments, development of school curricula, and writing of popular and academic historical works*".

Politicians have a big role in the public use of history and have a special responsibility for corruption and misuse of history as a means of political struggle (Gallerano, 2001, p. 112; also see Tekeli, 2013). By misusing the history, politicians legitimize their power and provide support to their policies (Tosh, 1997, p. 21). Both the ruling party and the opposing party (or those opponents with authority) try to benefit from the history for their political aims (Tosh, 1997, pp. 9, 11).

The misuse of history is a common problem associated not only with dictatorships but also with democracies (Wirth, 2003, p. 19; and see De Baets, 2013, p. 18). Thus, Parenti (2004), Zinn (2009), and Loewen's (2015) critical research studies are good examples for this issue within the context of the USA. Stanford (2013, p. 41) states that it is easy for the political power to show how history has been corrupted under the dictatorship (authoritative) regimes, but he adds

that it is more important to see how history has been abused by the open societies of the West. However, when strong nationalism, racism, or religious prejudices capture people's minds, it adds up to the difficulty of seeing the preconceptions in histories written with such prejudices.

Many different views have been suggested about the misuse of history. Lilletun (2003, pp. 114-116) explains how history is misused in three ways: "*the use of history as an instrument of legitimacy in authoritarian regimes (East European example)*", "*the abundance of knowledge in which semi-truths in modern communication societies, distortions and oversimplifications take place*" and "*history written by the winners (the losers do not have the right to speak)*". According to Stanford (2013, p. 44) , history can be misused by means of *"putting history in place of life, imposition of past evils into today, forcing the history to serve a theory, state, or prejudice, and regarding bad history as good history"*. Wirth (2003, pp. 36-48), on the other hand, claims that the misuse of history has different methods like "*denial of a clear historical fact", "deception", "fixing to a certain event", "omission," "exhibiting laziness and ignorance and abusing history for commercial interests"* and it is difficult to categorize them and adds that that there are multiple categories of misuse.

The Recommendation No. 15 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe which regards history teaching as an important factor to maintain peace in Europe, has also addressed the misuse of history. Under the heading of "The Misuse of History", the forms of the misuse of history as taught in school or as research are stated as follows: "*the creation of false evidences, misled statistics, false ideas; putting another event forward to justify or conceal another event; distorting the past for propaganda purposes; the creation of the "we" and "them" distinction with an ultra-nationalistic version; misuse of historical records; denying and disregarding historical facts* " (REC, 2001).

History has been manipulated and misused in any period (Bédarida, 2001, p. 13; Wirth, 2003, p. 48). However, with the developing technology today, mainly visuals and historical records/evidences have been falsified so it can be stated that the misuse of history has become much easier and more common (Wirth, 2003, p. 34). Unfortunately, considering the problems in our world, the history which is misused is a history having dangerous and deadly results. (Hobsbawm, 2001, p. 87).

As understood, the misuse of history is an important problem standing in front of the future of the humanity and needs to be solved. So, what can be done about this problem within the context of history teaching? According to Wirth (2003, pp. 52-53), historian candidates and pre-service history teachers must be given a very good training about how history is written and then they must be made to understand that history is always open to changes, historians are part of their own periods and societies, and they are not independent of objectivity. This is a prerequisite for any study of history in an honest fashion which is aware of its limits and tries to reach truth. In addition, the candidates must be trained to analyse any written and visual historical sources critically and they must be equipped for such studies in a fashion within this context. Moreover, an important part of this education must be to raise the candidates' awareness about how history has been misused up to now with its examples. Wirth (2003, pp. 53-54) states that the teachers who were trained can also educate their students about the nature of the history and the analysis of historical sources and they can make their students become sensitive to the misuse of history by giving examples. However, teachers should also consider out-of-class sources during this instructional process and help their students be choosy about the information offered to them by mass media and information and communication technologies.

As seen, these suggestions made about the misuse of history bring the understanding of methodological dimension of history and the nature of history into the forefront in the training of pre-service history teachers. As stated by Stradling (2003a, p. 79), it is important for students to comprehend the nature of history and the working styles of historians because today some political groups use history for the nationalistic purposes and they even misuse it. As understood, this education is a requirement not only for training of historian candidates and pre-service history teachers but also for the education of all the citizens in the society and finally for a good society. Thus, the following statements by Loewen (2015, p. 636) really lay emphasis on this situation: "*the citizens, who are historians themselves, can detect lies and distortions, benefit from the sources to learn what happened in the past, and create an extraordinary force for democracy"*

Generally, people's beliefs about the past, whether or not they are historians, have an effect on their political actions and everyday behaviours. Therefore, it is an important responsibility to have reliable information about the past (Stanford, 1990, as cited in Stanford, 2013, p. xv). Thus, historians have the most important responsibility to inform about the past and prevent the misuse of history. On the other hand, history will be used for any purpose by people who did not receive training in history education and do not know the nature and methodology of history (Tosh, 1997,

pp. 27-28). Bédarida (2001, p. 11) asserts that there are two conditions for historians to fulfil their responsibilities: political, intellectual, social, and financial freedom to work independently and commitment with respect to the principles of discipline of history to prove the truth.

This study aims to reveal the opinions of participants about the misuse of history. The participants who are both historian candidates and pre-service teachers in the discipline of history both receive education in history in the Faculty of Letters and also take pedagogical formation training for the profession of history teaching in the Faculty of Education. While choosing the research topic and developing the interview questions, 'the symposium called "*The Misuse of History: Symposium on 'Facing Misuses of History*" and organized in June 28-30, 1999 in Oslo, Norway and the questions which study groups tried to answer (Wirth, 2003, p. 19) were used.

In the study, the participants' views about the following topics were sought.

- the reasons for different and opposite interpretations about a historical person in the case of Abdülhamit II[2]
- the misuse of history and the ways of misuse of history
- how to raise the awareness of the students about the misuse of history.

2. Methodology

The Research Model

The research study was carried out with qualitative research method and basic qualitative research design. The basic qualitative research design is " *interested in how people interpret their lives, how they construct their world and what meanings they give to their experiences. The whole purpose is to understand how people comprehend their lives and experiences*" (Merriam, 2013, pp. 22-23).

The Population of the Study

The study was carried out with the students studying in their final year of bachelor's studies in the Department of History and taking pedagogical formation training at Ataturk University Faculty of Letters in 2014-2015 academic year. The participants both received education in the field of history in the Faculty of Letters and also took training on teaching profession and teaching history to qualify as a teacher in the Faculty of Education. The participants of the study consisted of total 47 students, 27 female and 20 male students. The reason for conducting the study with the students taking pedagogical formation training was that these participants were both historian candidates and pre-service history teachers. While composing the study group, convenience sampling method (see Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 141) was adopted.

Data Collection

The data of the research study were gathered via open-ended questionnaire consisting of three-open ended questions. While developing the questions, the relevant literature was reviewed and also the questions which study groups tried to answer in *The Misuse of History: Symposium on 'Facing Misuses of History"* organized in June 28-30, 1999 in Oslo, Norway were used (see Wirth, 2003, p. 19). First, the opinions of two faculty members who are experts in the field were taken about the questions prepared and then the piloting was performed with the 4th grade students studying in the Department of History Teaching in the Faculty of Education. Moreover, the opinions of the pre-service teachers participating in the piloting study were taken regarding the questions. Considering all these, some minor changes were made to the data collection tool and then it was finalized. The data were collected on 22nd, February 2015.

Data Analysis

The research data were analysed via content analysis method. As known, *"the basic process in content analysis is to bring together similar data within the framework of specific concepts and themes and to interpret them in a way that the reader can understand"* (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 259). After an intensive reading and reviewing process of the data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire, the researcher generated the codes and categories. During this intensive reading and reviewing process, firstly, the codes were generated by determining the meaningful parts of the data, and then the similarities and differences between the codes were detected and finally the categories which could draw the interrelated codes together were created. During this process, firstly the participants' responses to the 1st question and then to the 2nd, and 3rd questions were examined. Then, the 1st participant's responses to all of the qu-

2. Abdülhamit II was an Ottoman sultan who ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909. His policies during his reign have been discussed both by the politicians and the historians and they have been interpreted differently (See Yazıcı 2014).

estions and then the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, ….47th participants answers to all of the questions were reviewed, respectively. Thus, the researcher paid attention to the consistency between the codes and categories and their representations of the data. During the formation of codes and categories, the opinions of two faculty members who are experts in scientific research and teach post-graduate courses were taken (see Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, pp. 259-271). The data were presented in tables with their frequencies and percentages. Because the participants expressed more than one opinion for the questions, the relative frequency indicates the total number of opinions, not the number of participants. The participants' views were quoted for the presentation of the data. The numerical codes determined for the participants were used during the quoting.

3. Findings

The data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire were presented in tables and interpreted in this section of the study.

The participants' views about the reasons for different and opposite interpretations about Abdülhamit II

First, the participants were asked their opinions about the reasons for different and opposite interpretations about Abdülhamit II. Based on the case of Abdülhamit II, one of the controversial characters of Ottoman history, what the participants thought about the different interpretations about a historical person wanted to be presented, that is, their awareness about the nature of history wanted to be revealed. The participants' views were presented in table 1.

Table 1. The participants' views about the reasons for different and opposite interpretations about Abdülhamit II

Views	f	%
The reasons for both positive and negative opinions about Abdülhamit II		
Not being objective about the event	17	24
Reflecting ideological views	8	11
The existence of different perspectives	8	11
Not considering the conditions of the period	7	10
Abdülhamit II reigning during a painful and sensitive period of time	6	8
The effect of second hand and incomplete knowledge	4	6
The effect of personal interests	2	3
History being open to interpretation	2	3
The information sources of the period either supporting the sultan or democracy	1	1
Viewing events from the same standpoint	1	1
The reasons for negative opinions about Abdülhamit II		
The foreigners blackened Abdülhamit II due to his policies	9	13
Not liking Abdülhamit II's autocratic regime	3	4
Hostility towards Abdülhamit II	1	1
The reasons for positive opinions about Abdülhamit II		
Assuming that Abdülhamit II worked hard for the welfare of the state and nation	1	1
Feeling oneself as his grandchild	1	1
Admiring Abdülhamit II's policies	1	1
Total	72	100

The participants' views about the reasons for different and opposite interpretations about Abdülhamit II could be evaluated in three categories. The participants expressed their views about that topic considering (a) both positive and negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II, (b) only negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II and (c) only positive interpretations about Abdülhamit II. According to the participants who approached the subject in general considering both positive and negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II, the most important reason for this different and opposite interpretation is that this period was not evaluated objectively. Five participants who shared this view evaluated people's different opinions and views as one of the reasons for not being objective. Considering this issue, participant

10 stated: *"not being able to view events objectively... While some groups approve Abdulhamit and what he did, some others consider this condition- Abdulhamit and what he did -as unacceptable. It is argued that he did wrong things. However, if they could look at it objectively, what he really did wrong or right would be revealed"*. The participants expressed the existence of different perspectives through the reflection of ideological opinions in the second place. Participant 23 stated : "*the reasons for these publications are certainly ideological because in line with the ideology of Abdulhamit II, two people with opposing opinions who like or don't like him can describe or interpret Abdulhamit II as good or bad and knowingly or unintentionally far from being objective considering their views".* The participants who expressed the presence of different viewpoints did not consider this situation as the reasons for not being objective. However, only two participants directly mentioned the naturalness of different points of view. For example, participant 40 expressed his opinions like that: "*to me different and opposite interpretations are due to the different interpretations of the events that occurred in that period. "There is no such a thing that everybody will hold the same opinion. It is normal to make different interpretations about Abdülhamit II. As far as there are different opinions, there will always be different interpretations*". The opinions shared at the top of the list by the participants are that the conditions of the period are not considered and Abdülhamit II became a sultan during a painful and delicate period. Participant 4 explained the following about not taking into consideration the conditions of the period: **"***if we want to examine a period or an event in history, we must know the environment and the conditions under which the events occurred and then we must interpret it considering that period of time. If we cannot do this, we lose out objectivity. Therefore, different interpretations will come out".* It is undoubtedly an important weakness to discuss written history and the period of Abdülhamit II without considering the conditions of the period. However, masterpieces with different viewpoints can be created considering the conditions of the period. Participant 28 drew attention to the difficulties of the period with his statements "*…particularly because Abdülhamit II reigned during the period when the Ottoman Empire was in bad condition and he encountered many problems when he became a sultan, maybe he stepped into the situation in which he was*". The participants mentioned the effect of the second-hand and imperfect knowledge at the mid-rank level. About this issue, the participant 35 stated, "*making these interpretations with either second-hand knowledge or unconsciously are effective".* Drawing attention to the nature of science, only two participants argued that history was open to interpretation and determined that objectivity was difficult in history. While participant 8 stated, *"history is a concept of knowledge which is open to interpretation. While some historians accepted Abdülhamit II and what he did as correct, some historians made negative interpretations about them...".* Participant 17 stated, "*…History is not 100 % objective. It is only in a struggle for being objective"*. The participants stated at the bottom of the list that the information sources were either in favour of the sultan or democracy and the events were viewed from a single perspective.

The first opinions of the participants who considered the negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II were that the foreigners blackened and discredited Abdülhamit II due to his policies. The participants determined that the foreigners did not like Abdülhamit II as he attempted to revive the Ottoman Empire which was defined as the sick man and he tried to prevent their goals and they tried to blacken him with attributions like "The Red Sultan" due to Armenian problem and his rejection of Theodor Herzl's demand for land to establish Israel. Participant 38 stated, "*…Abdülhamit II came to the power during the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Despite this, he reigned nearly 33 years. He never made any concession regarding the state. That's why he was called "The Red Sultan" in the west*". The three participants determined that while Abdülhamit II was trying to save the Ottoman Empire from overwhelming difficulties, he was blackened and discredited due to his totalitarian regime. Participant 1 said, "*Sultan Abdülhamit II took precautions to save the Ottoman Empire from the overwhelming difficulties during the period he lived,... and he succeeded. While carrying out the reforms, he sometimes applied autocratic regime and those who opposed this regime called him "The Red Sultan...".* One of the participants (coded as 30) identified that despite Abdülhamit II's being a political genius and his achievements during the most difficult times of the Empire, he was negatively criticised due to the hostility towards him.

The participants who took into consideration positive interpretations about Abdülhamit II expressed the following opinions: assuming that Abdülhamit II worked hard for the welfare of the state and nation, feeling oneself as his grandchild, and admiring Abdülhamit II's policies.

Although most of them expressed their opinions considering both the positive and negative interpretations and also some of them took different world views and perspectives naturally, it was understood that the participants generally thought that the negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II resulted from the prejudiced attitudes. As a matter of fact, the statement of participant 30 exemplifies this: "the *negative criticisms are nothing more than hostility towards Abdülhamit II"*.

The participants' views about the misuse of history and the ways of misusing history

All of the participants determined that history could be misused. The participants' views about the ways of misusing history were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The participants' views about the ways of misusing history

Views	f	%
Using the past for political purposes	10	16
Blackening historical personalities with "false information"	9	15
Telling the past ideologically	8	13
Distorting the past via mass media	8	13
Blackening Turkish history by foreign countries/writers	6	10
Distorting the past according to personal interests	5	8
Interpreting the past according to the personal truth	4	6
Making claims about events that did not really happen	4	6
Presenting false information to the society	3	5
Producing false documents	2	3
Hiding the documents	1	2
Smuggling archaeological pieces	1	2
Denying events that cause conflict with national feelings	1	2
Total	62	100

The participants' first opinions about this topic are that past has been used for political purposes. The participants determined that politicians used the past to strengthen their positions and influence the public and they tried the ways to find examples suitable to their activities or to blacken the activities which were not appropriate to their activities from the past to legitimize their activities today. The participant 6 stated, "*if a new leader wants to strengthen his position, he either changes or blackens the opinions opposing to his new ideas".* Participant 13 said, "*to give an example from the present day, ... without considering A Party or B Party, we witness every day that they use the history for their own benefits...purposes "*. The second opinion the participants stated was blackening historical personalities with false information. The participants determined that Ataturk was blackened and used against some segments of the society with false information, Kanuni and Abdülhamit II were blackened, Vahdettin was shown as a traitor, and people were made to hate the sultans. Participant 39 said, "*the most concrete example is that Mustafa Kemal is being used and told incorrectly by some unconscious segments in the society against certain segments. It is tried to be told that Mustafa Kemal had an antipathy for a conservative wing "*. Participant 9 said, "*for example, they called Vahdettin traitor. They blackened him. This is open to discussion. In this regard, there is no place for subjectivity in history"*. The participants' third opinions were telling the past ideologically and distorting the past via mass media. Participant 18 expressed her opinions about telling the past ideologically like that: *"mass media, teachers, books, in other words, the role holders want to reflect their own ideologies*. *Thus, it can be misused. …*" About the distortion of the past via mass media, the participants (5 people) emphasized particularly historical TV series. The participants stated that TV series blackened the Turkish history, they misled the public with false information, and they implanted their ideologies by giving a piece of information. For instance, participant 23 shared her opinions like that: *"for example, shooting a TV series with full of mistakes unlike the real history will cause the public who watch the series to be misled*. *We can give an example a TV series .....which has been shot recently. The historical personalities in this TV series, in other words, Ottoman lifestyle, were depicted totally different. It was depicted as a Roman way of living and the public was misled.* Another view comparatively placed at a higher level is that foreign states and writers discredited Turkish history. The views of participant 33 on this issue can be given as an example: "*To exemplify, while many events in history resulted in our favour, foreign countries teach our history badly in their own courses and raise individuals who see Turkey as an enemy.* Then, in the middle of the list, distorting the past according to personal interests and interpreting it considering the personal truth and making claims about events that did not really happen such as so called Armenian genocide were stated. About

personal truth (subjectivity), participant 32 stated, *"because everybody interprets history in their own way and gets further away from the dimensional reality, they misuse history. And when history is misused, it is told inaccurately to the next generation …"*. The participants considered the effect of personal truth negatively while discussing the past. Participant 44 stated the following about the events which never happened: *"for example, by claiming that there is Armenian genocide, a nation can be under suspicion. Making claims about events that did not really happen inflicts a heavy blow to science and it is not science anymore …".* Finally, there are the opinions of producing false documents, hiding the documents, smuggling archaeological pieces, and denying events that cause conflict with national feeling in the list. While the participants mentioned the ways of misusing history, they used the example of Armenian issue with maximum five people. Three of the participants pointed out that the reason for the effective result of misuse of history was societies' low levels of literacy and doing research. For example, participant 16 explained his views like that: "*Because today's society does not consist of people who read a lot, write a lot, do research, and approach history with prejudice and unconsciousness, they can be deceived easily".* Two of the participants mentioned the responsibility of the historians about this issue. Out of these two participants, participant 21 reminded the responsibility of the historians with his views: *"if historians are not alert, they will be used".* When the participants' views were examined, it was revealed that such conditions as the nature of history, neglecting its disciplinary structure, and misusing evidence were not expressed.

The participants' views about how to raise students' awareness about the ways of misusing history

The participants were finally asked the following question in the research study: If they were a history teacher, how would they raise their students' awareness about the misuse of history? The participants' views were presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The participants' views about how to raise students' awareness about the ways of misusing history

Suggestions	f	%
Adopting objectivity	21	25
Raising awareness about the misuse of history and its damages	10	12
Encouraging to do research	8	10
Guiding to reliable resources	7	8
Suggesting that events should be evaluated considering the period in which they were experienced	7	8
Suggesting that different sources should be used	6	7
Suggesting learning through inquiry	4	5
Adopting national values	4	5
Teaching how to establish a bond between the past and future	3	4
Suggesting reading a lot of books	2	2
Suggesting considering different viewpoints	2	2
Teaching how historians address the sources	1	1
Explaining history and the purpose of history	1	1
Discussing one-sided publications with original documents in front of the students	1	1
Bringing two opposing publications into the classroom and displaying the truth by comparing them	1	1
Suggesting interpreting the events after a long time	1	1
Suggesting evaluating the characters by considering their psychology	1	1
Avoiding definite and explicit answers	1	1
Learning to respect different opinions and ideas	1	1
Implanting democratic principles	1	1
Raising awareness about being ethical before history	1	1
Total	84	100

The most important views of the participants about this issue are that objectivity should be given prominence in history courses and adopted by the students. The participants stated that they would teach history to their students objectively and without bias and they would recommend their students to consider history in the same way. Moreover, they think that they will tell history as it is and with real and true documents and thus they will raise awareness of students. As understood, for them, objectivity is the most important shield in front of the misuse of history. About this issue, participant 4 stated, "*I tell history as it is. By attempting to protect my objectivity and sticking to the facts…"* . Participant 37 remarked, *"I would convey the facts and experiences objectively*. *I would present it by benefiting from the findings uncovered in the past. Thus, I would enable them to see the facts*". In addition, participant 42 stated, "*I would tell them the correct version of the history and inspire them to obey this rule. I want them to prevent people in their environment from making such mistakes and if there are such people, I can ask them to warn them*". The second view in the list is to raise students' awareness about the misuse of history and its damages. The participants stated that they would explain students how history could be misused, why it is wrong, its damages, and the consequences for those who misused history. Participant 44 who also shared the same view suggested using interesting methods and materials to raise students' awareness about the damages of misusing history: "*I would organize activities, programs, and theatre plays. I would have the students watch films and documentaries and raise students' awareness about its damages".* Participant 2 stated the following about this issue: "*…I can explain my students the end of the leaders and emperors who used the events such as wars, deaths in history as their vision and thus misused history as well as the mistakes they made and raise their awareness about this issue*". Participant 26 stated, *"first of all, I would detect the misuses of the people who abused history. After that, I would do research to correct these misuses and by taking notes, I would explain the facts with reasons, answer their questions, and finally raise their awareness*". Some of the participants stated that students could learn and understand history not from the second-hand knowledge but through doing research and encourage them to do research via assignments. Participant 32 said, "*…and I want them to understand and learn history not only with what they heard but also doing research. If these are done, history is not misused …*". Another view stated by the participants at the top of the list is to guide students to correct and true sources. The participants who shared this opinion stated that they would suggest their students using first-hand or true sources and warn them not to use unqualified and unreliable sources. Participant 11 stated, "*… and warn them not to read unreliable sources. Moreover, I would recommend them first-hand sources and inform them about how to reach them".* In addition to this, participant 5 opined, "*…I would benefit from the more experienced people in the field of history. … I would keep them away from the sources of the people who are not qualified and competent in history".* The other two important views of participants in the top list of the table are to suggest students that every event should be evaluated considering the conditions of the period they are experienced in and benefit from different sources. Considering the conditions of the period, participant 45 said, *"I would recommend them to interpret and live by taking the conditions of the period into consideration".* About benefiting from different sources, participant 47 remarked, *"I would recommend my students not to stick to the same historical sources and ask them to benefit from different sources".* One of the views of the participants in the middle of the list is to suggest students learning through inquiry and the other one is to have them adopt national values. About learning through inquiry, the participants determined that they would ask their students to be suspicious about knowledge, not to rely on any information they hear and learn by doing research and questioning. The participants who shared the opinion about adopting national values stated that they would raise their students' awareness about the misuse of history by instilling national conscience, introducing their ancestors, and making them aware of their culture and traditions and as stated by one participant (coded as 39), they would not allow the West to corrupt them. The other opinions are stated at low ratios. Out of these opinions, suggesting students considering different viewpoints, teaching how historians address the sources, and explaining history and the purpose of history draw attention as they are specific to the discipline. Participant 21 who expressed these views focused on introducing the disciplinary structure of history, one of the foundations of constructivist learning, to the students: "by *paying attention to the historical methodology courses, I would teach how a historian criticizes the source, critical edition and etc, make students read sources written on this topic, and I would equip them to raise this awareness".* In addition to this, the views intended for social purposes (see Dilek, 2001) like recommending students to respect different opinions and ideas, implanting democratic principles, and raising awareness about being ethical before history were stated by very few participants.

4. Results and Discussions

The results yielded and discussions were included in this section of the research study. The research study was carried out with the students studying in their final year of bachelor's studies in the Department of History and taking pedagogical formation training at Ataturk University Faculty of Letters in 2014-2015 academic year.

The research study primarily explored the participants' views considering the reasons for the different and opposite interpretations about Abdülhamit II. When the participants' views about this topic were examined, they were categorized into three groups. The participants expressed their opinions about this issue considering (a) both positive and negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II, (b) only negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II, and (c) only positive interpretations about Abdülhamit II. According to the participants who discussed the issue in general, that is, considering both positive and negative interpretations about Abdülhamit II, the most important reason for these different and opposite interpretations is that this period has not been evaluated objectively. Five participants sharing this opinion evaluated that people's different opinions and ideas were one of the reasons for not being objective. According to Yazıcı (2014, p. 233) who studied the change in the historical perceptions about Sultan II. Abdulhamit, "*introduction of II. Abdulhamit with excessive hatred or excessive admiration which are two completely opposite views reveals that an objective view has not developed among historians*". The other views of the participants are reflecting ideological ideas, the existence of different viewpoints, not considering the conditions of the period, Abdülhamit II becoming a sultan during a painful and sensitive period of time, the effect of second-hand and incomplete knowledge, the effect of personal interests, history being open to interpretation, information sources of the period supporting either the sultan or democracy, and viewing events from the same standpoint, respectively. The first opinions of the participants considering the negative views about Abdülhamit II is that Abdülhamit II was blackened and discredited due to his policies by the foreigners. The participants stated that the foreigners did not like Abdülhamit II as he attempted to revive the Ottoman Empire which was defined as the sick man and he tried to prevent their goals and also they tried to blacken him with attributions like "The Red Sultan" due to Armenian problem and his rejection of Israel's demand for land. The other two opinions of the participants expressed rarely about this issue were not liking the totalitarian regime implemented by Abdülhamit II while he was trying to save the Ottoman Empire from overwhelming difficulties and generally hostility towards Abdülhamit II. It is seen that views of the participants are relatively consistent with the views in the literature (i.e. Yazıcı 2014) but they are limited when compared to them. The participants' positive views about Abdülhamit II were expressed only once. Although some of them react normally to different world views and perspectives, it is understood that participants usually disapprove the different and opposite views contrary to the image of Abdülhamit II in their minds and they think that they result from the prejudiced attitudes. The opinions expressed by the participants reveal that they partially have a command of historical methodology. It was revealed in the study carried out by Yılmaz and Kaya (2011, p. 90) to explore social studies teachers' perceptions about history that most of the teachers did not emphasise the quality of history based on interpretations and their perspectives about the nature of history were weak. As stated by Stradling (2003a, pp. 83, 124), nearly all of the historical events can be interpreted differently. First of all, incomplete findings and knowledge obtained mostly form a basis for this. In addition to this, different viewpoints of the historians, the period when it was written and the other pieces of findings cause different interpretations on the same findings.

The contradiction of the available information and the interpretation of the same information by different historians in different ways will become a problem for the students who are looking for certainty and reality in history lesson and considering learning as only acquiring knowledge (Stradling, 2003b, pp. 28-29). Students need to understand that differences of opinions are not wrong and they mutually need to acquire positive attitudes towards respecting these differences of opinions (Grech, 2003, p. 83). As stated by Stradling (2003a, p. ix) students must *"comprehend that there can be many different points of views regarding any historical events or developments and that these viewpoints often reflect a variety of experiences, assumptions and beliefs that are equally valid".*

All of the participants stated that history could be misused. The participants' views about misusing history are ranked without differentiating from each other in terms of percentage. The first view of the participants is that history has been used for political purposes. History which is the most appropriate discipline to support ideologies was used to justify opposing political views and conditions (Prats Cuevas, 2003, p. 52). In this respect, politicians have a special responsibility for corrupting history (Gallerano, 2001, p. 112). The other views of the participants are discrediting historical personalities with false information, telling the past ideologically, distorting past via mass media, blackening Turkish history by foreign states and writers, distorting the past according to the personal interests, interpreting history in terms of personal truth, making claims about the events that did not really happen, presenting false information to the public, producing fake documents, hiding documents, smuggling archaeological artefacts, and denying events that conflict with the national values. When the participants mentioned the ways of misusing history, they mostly considered the Armenian problem (5 people). Three participants stated that the reasons for effective results of misusing history were due to weak levels of literacy and doing research in the society. When their views were examined, such views as neglecting the nature of history, its disciplinary structure, and abusing evidence were not encountered.

When the participants' views about how to raise students' awareness in terms of the misuses of history are examined, objectivity stands out. The most important views of the participants about this issue are to suggest that students should be told history objectively and without prejudices and students should approach history objectively and without prejudices as they do. Objectivity is the most important shield in front of the misuse of history for the participants. It is really difficult to predict to what extent teachers are objective while teaching. However, as known by those who are interested in history and historical methodology, although objectivity is a goal in history, full objectivity and neutrality are not possible (Halkin, 2014, p. 13). The reasons for achieving objectivity can be discussed in terms of two factors: historian himself and the evidence he uses. The topic for research, proofs, and the preferences for fiction are the limiting factors resulting from the historian himself. The limiting factors resulting from the evidence are whether or not the event explored is caused by any of the parties, preparing for administrative, financial or military purposes, and the fact that a section has been destroyed/ disappeared before reaching today (Yazıcı, 2015, pp. 16-17). Despite these limiting factors, teachers' attitudes and in-class practices are very important. If teachers avoid the misuse of history (such as prejudgement), attempt to be objective as best as they can, and always make an effort about this issue, they will have an effect on the students (Dance, 1969, p. 97). The other views stated by the participants are raising students' awareness about the misuses of history and its damages, encouraging them to do research, guiding them to the correct and true sources and helping them to keep away from unreliable sources, suggesting them that each event should be evaluated considering the conditions of the period, recommending to use different sources, learning through inquiry, and adopting national values. The views specific to the discipline (see Dilek, 2001) such as recommending students to respect different opinions and ideas, teaching them how a historian approaches sources, and explaining history and purpose of history are stated very scarcely.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It was revealed in the research study that the participants partially had a command of historical methodology and they were not qualified enough about the misuses of history. The following suggestions were made in this research:

- Historian candidates and history teachers should be given a very good training about historical methodology during their education. The formation of historical knowledge and the features of historical knowledge must be emphasised in their education (see Stradling, 2003a; Wirth, 2003). However, apart from this, it should not be neglected how historical information is discussed and interpreted in political, artistic works and mass media with political, artistic and commercial concerns (see Stradling 2003a; Stradling, 2003b).
- Analysis and interpretation skills should be given importance during the education of historians and pre-service history teachers. The emphasis should be placed on the use and inquiry of any source materials which are effective in the presentation of historical information such as films and documentaries and primary sources for the formation of historical knowledge (see Stradling 2003a).
- Historian candidates and pre-service history teachers should implement teaching practices based on sources, understand the importance of sources in writing of history and at the same time consider the limitations of sources (see Stradling, 2003a). Especially the use of sources conflicting with one another has a critical importance. "*Skills such as analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and evaluation that can be developed through the handling of conflicting evidence will provide a basis for both students to develop their historical understanding skills and to take a more critical attitude towards those who want to use the past to legitimize their contemporary positions"* (McCully, 2012, p.151).
- Pre-service teachers should be offered an education based on examples about how to misuse the history and how to make their students aware of it. Teachers who receive a good education in these matters will take important steps in terms of developing awareness and being prepared against the misuse of history for both themselves and their students (Wirth, 2003, pp. 53-54).

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