

Exploring the Learning Outcomes of a School Newspaper Club

Alpbilge Tilbe¹, Hasan Efe Aydın², Erkan Deha Kirbacı³, Can Muratoğlu⁴, Semih Zakuto⁵,
Ozan Umur⁶, Ömer Oruç Turgutlugil⁷, Özge Yılmaz Gel⁸

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Hisar School, Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract

This study examines the influence of a School Newspaper Club on students' academic development and cultural awareness over the course of an academic year. Participation in the club required students to engage in research, interviewing, writing, and editorial processes, which contributed to measurable improvements in information literacy, critical thinking, and written communication skills. The structure and content of the school newspaper evolved through the systematic use of student-designed surveys, enabling contributors to gather and analyze reader feedback. This procedure is applied to board members to evaluate their involvement efficiency. This iterative, data-driven process not only enhanced the publication's relevance but also introduced students to foundational research methodologies. Increased student interest in scientific topics led to the development of a dedicated science supplement, providing authentic opportunities for science communication and analytical reasoning. Overall, findings indicate that involvement in the Newspaper Club fosters academic self-efficacy, cultural competence, and evidence-based thinking, suggesting that extracurricular journalism initiatives can function as valuable pedagogical tools for holistic student development.

Keywords: journalism, extracurricular learning, cultural awareness, science communication, data-driven instruction

1. Introduction

Objective Gazette is a newspaper club at Hisar School in Göktürk, Istanbul. Its mission statement, "From April 2025, we will improve every second!" reflects the club's strong commitment to continue to improve. In this article, we will explain how the newspaper club has worked toward becoming better every second. The Objective Gazette project was started in response to the 6.2 magnitude earthquake that struck Istanbul on April 23, which also happens to be National Sovereignty and Children's Day, a national holiday honoring the country's first president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. "Since April 2025, we will improve every second!" is the club's stated goal. The club's constant dedication to ongoing development is reflected in this statement. We shall describe the newspaper club's efforts to improve every moment in this piece. After an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.2 struck Istanbul on April 23, the Objective Gazette project was started.

Currently, university applications are significantly influenced by extracurricular learning and skills in non-academic areas. Previous research indicates that involvement in high school journalism activities is linked to a more enduring dedication to journalistic work and the cultivation of professional values at a young age. Furthermore, technological advancements have facilitated the rapid and effortless acquisition of information. Nevertheless, it is equally crucial to assess the reliability and accuracy of the sources, despite the ease with which information is accessible. As AlNajjar argues [1], adopting a critical media literacy approach enables youth to engage more consciously with the political and cultural dimensions of the world around them. In this context, the newspaper club offers students the chance to conduct their own research and develop independent opinions on global issues as an after-school activity connected to academic learning. Once more, this ability helps young people, especially high school students, become more aware of their socio-cultural environment and the political context of the society they live in. Adopting a critical media literacy approach, according to AlNajjar, enables young people to interact more deliberately with the political and cultural aspects of the world around them. In this context, Buckingham (2003) argues that media education is not merely a technical skill, but rather a social necessity that enables young people to make sense of their place within modern culture [2]. In this regard, the newspaper club gives students the chance to carry out independent study and form their own opinions on world concerns as an extracurricular activity related to academic learning. This learning model reflects constructivist principles that put the learner at the center of the knowledge-building process and Kolb's experiential learning theory, which

emphasizes that authentic experience is the foundation of meaningful development [3]. Furthermore, students write and improve their own articles while supporting their ideas with accurate information and reliable sources. To evaluate the academic impact of the Objective Gazette on its readership, this study employed a survey-based approach in which 13 high school students, randomly selected from the school's reader population, responded to a structured questionnaire. The survey assessed reading habits, academic utility, and perceived learning outcomes, providing an empirical basis for understanding the extent to which a student-run school newspaper can function as an effective informal educational system. This process encourages students to seek out reliable information, enhances their cultural awareness, and helps them approach global issues with an open mind [4]. In addition, Brown, Collins and Duguid argue that knowledge is situated through authentic activities within a culture of learning—such as the collective structure of a newspaper club [5]. Additionally, students develop and refine their own articles, providing accurate information and credible references to back up their claims. This technique helps them approach global challenges with an open mind, improves their cultural understanding, and motivates them to look for reliable information. Additionally, it enhances their capacity to examine, challenge, and relate various points of view. This learning structure includes constructivist ideas that put the learner at the center of the knowledge-building process, as well as Kolb's experiential learning theory.

2. Method

To investigate the perceived academic impact of the Objective Gazette school newspaper on its student readership, this study used a quantitative survey-based research design [3]. The main goal of the method was to systematically gather reader perspectives on how engagement with the newspaper influenced their academic skills, general knowledge, and classroom participation. To ensure that the data reflected genuine reader experiences, participants were chosen through a random sampling procedure from the Hisar School high school student population who had previously read at least one issue of the Objective Gazette. A set of 13 students participated in the study, representing a cross-section of the school's high school readers. The method's main goal was to methodically collect readers' opinions about how their interactions with the newspaper affected their participation in class, general knowledge, and academic skills. Participants were chosen at random from among Hisar School's high school students who had read at least one issue of the Objective Gazette in order to guarantee that the data represented actual reader experiences. Thirteen students in all, representing a cross-section of the school's high school readers, participated in the study. They were selected from Grades 9 through 12. The Objective Gazette Readers Form, a structured questionnaire created especially for this study, was used to collect data. The form was carefully designed to capture a comprehensive picture of student reading behavior and the self-reported educational outcomes associated with regular or occasional engagement with the newspaper. Before responding to any items, participants were presented with an informed consent clause at the beginning of the form, clearly stating that their answers would be collected and interpreted for research purposes. To provide a thorough picture of students' reading habits and the self-reported educational effects related to frequent or infrequent newspaper use, the questionnaire was carefully designed. Before answering any questions, participants were given an informed consent clause at the beginning of the form, which made it clear that their responses would be gathered and analyzed for research purposes. This consent step had to be completed before continuing, and participation in the survey was always completely voluntary. Participants were notified at the outset of the form that their answers would be collected and examined for research reasons before they were asked any questions [3]. Participation in the survey was always entirely optional, and completion of this permission step was needed before proceeding. To further safeguard participant privacy and encourage truthfulness. The questionnaire was carefully crafted to give a comprehensive picture of students' reading habits and the self-reported educational benefits associated with frequent or infrequent newspaper use. Before responding to any questions, participants were notified at the beginning of the form that their answers will be collected and examined for research reasons. This consent process had to be finished before proceeding, and taking part in the survey was always entirely voluntary. To further protect participant privacy and encourage truthfulness.

The actual questionnaire was divided into multiple parts, each of which concentrated on a different aspect of the reader experience. Students were asked to identify how often they read the newspaper, which sections they usually engaged with, and how long they regularly spent reading a single issue in the first section, which focused on reading habits and general involvement. Section selections covered categories



including school news, science-related articles, general news, and sports; response options for reading frequency ranged from reading every issue to reading rarely. Before examining the publication's alleged educational benefits, these items were created to provide a baseline understanding of how students engaged with it. To ensure that the data accurately reflected the full range of experiences, the second section of the study looked at the academic utility of the newspaper by asking students to identify contexts in which they had used newspaper content for educational purposes, such as class discussions, homework or projects, and exams or quizzes. Students who had not used the newspaper in any academic context were also given the option to indicate this. To ensure that the data fairly represented the entire spectrum of experiences, students who had not used the newspaper in any academic setting were also given the opportunity to declare this. A five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting Strongly Disagree and 5 denoting Strongly Agree, was used in the third and most significant section of the questionnaire to gauge students' perceptions of the academic impact of reading the Objective Gazette. Participants were asked to rate their degree of agreement with a series of statements regarding the educational value of reading the newspaper. These statements addressed whether the newspaper improved students' reading comprehension skills, whether it strengthened their ability to connect classroom knowledge to real-life issues, whether it improved their overall academic performance, and whether it A series of assertions about the educational benefit of reading the Objective Gazette were presented to participants, and they were asked to score how much they agreed with each statement. These statements addressed whether the newspaper enhanced students' comprehension of topics covered in class, whether it boosted their interest in academic subjects, whether it strengthened their ability to relate classroom knowledge to real-life issues, whether it enhanced their reading comprehension skills, whether it improved their overall academic performance, and whether it made them feel more comfortable contributing to class discussions after reading specific articles. This Likert-based section was important for the study because it allowed for the quantification of subjective reader perceptions and allowed for comparisons across grade levels and reading frequencies [6]. The fourth section examined post-reading behavior, asking students to describe what they usually did after coming across an article that piqued their interest. Response options included looking up more information on the subject, talking about the content with peers, thinking about their own opinions and values, taking concrete action like joining related activities or attending events, or doing nothing more. This Likert-based element was crucial to the study since it made it possible to compare reading rates and grade levels while quantifying subjective reader perceptions. Students were asked to explain what they usually did after coming upon an article that piqued their attention in the fourth segment, which examined post-reading behavior. Searching for more information on the subject, talking about it with friends, thinking about their own beliefs and values, taking actual action like participating in relevant activities or going to events, or doing nothing more were all possible responses. The purpose of this section was to evaluate the extent to which newspaper engagement stimulated broader intellectual curiosity and active learning behaviors beyond the act of reading itself. The fifth section addressed students' primary motivations for reading the newspaper, with options including academic interest, personal curiosity, teacher recommendation, social interest, and habit. Since motivation is widely acknowledged as a mediating factor in learning outcomes, understanding what motivates students to engage with the publication was thought to be an important context for interpreting the academic impact findings. Lastly, the questionnaire concluded with an open-ended question asking students to share their recommendations for how the Objective Gazette could be improved to better support student learning [3]. Students' main reasons for reading the newspaper were discussed in the fifth part, which included categories such as academic interest, personal curiosity, teacher recommendation, social interest, and habit. Since motivation is widely acknowledged as a mediating factor in learning outcomes, understanding what motivates students to interact with the publication was thought to be crucial context for interpreting the academic impact findings. An open-ended question at the end of the survey asked students to express their ideas for how the Objective Gazette may be enhanced to further assist student learning. This qualitative component provided an opportunity for students to express perspectives that could not be captured through fixed-response items alone, offering richer insight into reader expectations and unmet needs. Once all responses were collected, the data were analyzed to identify patterns in reading behavior, academic utility, and self-reported learning outcomes across the participant group. The findings from both the closed-ended and open-ended items were examined together to provide a holistic understanding of how the Objective Gazette functions as an informal educational resource within the school community. To provide a comprehensive view of how the Objective Gazette serves as an unofficial educational resource

within the school community, the results from both the closed-ended and open-ended questions were analyzed collectively.

3. Results

All 13 randomly chosen participants completed the survey and gave their informed consent before answering, resulting in a 100% consent and participation rate. The sample's demographics showed a significant concentration within a single grade level: 92.3% of respondents were enrolled in Grade 11, while the remaining 7.7% were Grade 10 students. No responses were received from Grade 9 or Grade 12, which may indicate the availability of students at the time of sampling or a higher level of engagement with the newspaper among upperclassmen. A significant concentration within a single grade level was found in the sample's demographic composition: 92.3% of respondents were enrolled in Grade 11, with the remaining 7.7% being students in Grade 10. Grades 9 and 12 did not receive any replies, which may indicate that students were not available during the sample period or that upperclassmen were more involved with the publication. In terms of reading frequency, the data showed that most participants do not regularly interact with the Objective Gazette; nearly half of respondents, 46.2%, reported reading the newspaper only infrequently, while 30.8% reported reading it occasionally. Only 23.1% of participants reported reading every issue, indicating that although the newspaper has a dedicated core readership, the larger student audience tends to interact with it infrequently. Thirty-eight percent of respondents said they occasionally read the newspaper, compared to nearly half (46.2%) who said they only rarely did so. Only 23.1% of participants said they read every issue, indicating that although the journal has a devoted core readership, the larger student population only sometimes interacts with it. The amount of time students reported spending on each issue also showed this pattern: 38.5% spent less than five minutes reading, another 38.5% spent between five and ten minutes; a smaller percentage indicated more sustained engagement, with 15.4% spending between ten and twenty minutes and only 7.7% reading for more than twenty minutes per issue. When combined, these numbers suggest that most readers interact with the newspaper in a relatively brief and selective manner rather than engaging in thorough, cover-cover reading. Only 7.7% of respondents reported reading for more than twenty minutes per issue, while 15.4% reported reading for ten to twenty minutes. When combined, these numbers indicate that rather than reading the newspaper cover to cover, most readers engage with it in a comparatively limited and selective manner [4]. The most popular category, general news, was chosen by 53.8% of participants; school news, science-related articles, and sports sections were each selected by 30.8% of respondents, suggesting an even distribution of interest across these topics. Interestingly, 38.5% of participants said they typically skim the newspaper rather than read it in detail, which is consistent with the low average time spent per issue and suggests that the publication's format or content depth may benefit from further development to encourage more thorough readership. 30.8% of respondents selected school news, science-related articles, and sports sections, suggesting a fairly even distribution of interest among these subjects. Significantly, 38.5% of participants said they typically skim the newspaper rather than read it in-depth. This is consistent with the low average time spent per issue and indicates that the format or content depth of the publication may benefit from further development to encourage more thorough readership [1]. Although the percentage of students reporting direct academic use is still relatively low, the fact that nearly a third of readers found the newspaper relevant to their coursework in some capacity indicates a meaningful, if underutilized, potential for academic integration. The results indicated a limited but relevant degree of integration with students' formal learning. A significant majority of those surveyed, 69.2%, reported that they had not used information from the Objective Gazette for any academic purpose. Of those who had used newspaper content for academic purposes, 23.1% had done so during class discussions, another 23.1% had used it for projects or homework, and 15.4% had found it helpful for tests or quizzes. The fact that almost a third of readers found the newspaper relevant to their coursework in some way indicates a significant, albeit untapped, potential for academic integration, even though the percentage of students reporting direct academic use is still relatively low. Students' perceptions of the educational value of reading the Objective Gazette were revealed by the Likert-scale items. The statement "Reading the Objective Gazette helps me better understand topics discussed in my classes" received an average rating of 4.08 out of 5, with 46.2% of participants giving it the highest possible rating of 5, 23.1% giving it a 4, and another 23.1% giving it a 3. Only one participant gave it a 2, and no respondents gave it the lowest rating of 1. The average grade for the statement "Reading the Objective Gazette helps me better understand topics discussed in my classes"

was 4.08 out of 5. According to the response distribution, 46.2% of participants gave the highest possible rating of 5, followed by 23.1% who chose 4 and another 23.1% who chose 3. The newspaper's contribution to classroom comprehension was widely seen favorably, as seen by the fact that just one participant gave this statement a score of two and no respondents gave it the lowest grade of one.(4)The statement "Reading the school newspaper improves my general knowledge" received an even higher average rating of 4.46, suggesting that students perceived the newspaper as particularly valuable for broadening their awareness beyond the formal curriculum. The remaining Likert items, which addressed the newspaper's impact on academic interest, the ability to connect classroom knowledge to real-life issues, reading comprehension, overall academic performance, and confidence in class participation, followed similar patterns of broadly positive agreement, though detailed breakdowns for each individual statement were partially visible in the available data. According to the section on post-reading behavior, engagement with the Objective Gazette often resulted in additional intellectual effort. The most popular response, selected by 53.8% of participants, suggests that the newspaper serves as a platform for social knowledge exchange and collaborative conversation. The newspaper's capacity to promote independent research and critical self-reflection is demonstrated by the fact that 46.2% of respondents reported looking up more information about an issue and considering their own ideas; a smaller percentage, 23.1%, said they did nothing after reading. The most popular response, selected by 53.8% of participants, was to discuss the topic with others. This suggests that the newspaper serves as an incentive for peer discussion and social information exchange. The newspaper's ability to promote independent inquiry and critical self-reflection is proven by the fact that 46.2% of respondents reported digging up more information about a subject and reflecting on their own perspectives. A smaller portion, 23.1%, reported taking concrete action, such as attending events or engaging in relevant activities, while another 23.1% reported doing nothing after reading. When asked why they read the newspaper, the vast majority of participants (84.6%) cited curiosity as their primary motivation, followed by academic interest (30.8%), social interest (30.8%), and teacher recommendation (7.7%). No participant reported reading out of habit, which may indicate that engagement with the newspaper is still an intentional decision rather than a routine, and that increasing the publication's visibility and accessibility could be an important factor in increasing readership. 30.8% of respondents mentioned social and academic interests, while 7.7% mentioned instructor recommendations. No participant mentioned reading out of habit, which may indicate that reading the newspaper is still a conscious decision rather than a habit, and that expanding the publication's exposure and accessibility may be vital for increasing readership. Lastly, the open-ended question asking for suggestions for improvement received a variety of positive answers from participants. Some students stressed the need for more academic content, such as study tips, exam advice, and simplified explanations of complex subjects; one respondent specifically suggested a dedicated section for subject summaries and vocabulary lists to increase reader engagement; others called for more detailed and visually appealing articles with attention-grabbing headlines to increase reader engagement; one participant suggested that the range of acceptable websites for writers be restricted to Wednesdays. Several students stressed the need for additional academic information, such as study guides, exam advice, and simplified explanations of difficult subjects. One user even suggested creating a special section containing subject summaries and vocabulary lists. To boost reader engagement, some argued for more in-depth, eye-catching articles with attention-grabbing headlines. Concerns over the reliability of the sources were also voiced, and one participant proposed limiting the number of websites that authors are allowed to use to increase the reliability of the information that is mentioned. One person suggested updates should not be limited to Wednesdays, while several others emphasized the significance of more frequent publication schedules. With comments like "its perfect" and "I think Objective Gazette is doing a good job at improving itself as more time passes," several participants expressed general contentment with the newspaper's current state, indicating a favorable overall reaction among a portion of the public. Together, these qualitative observations show the publication's strengths as well as the areas where specific enhancements could increase its appeal and instructional value.

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