



NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NEIGHBOUR COUNTRY PERCEPTIONS OF PRE-SERVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS – THE TURKISH CASE

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Abstract:

The aim of this research was to determine pre-service social studies teachers' knowledge and perceptions both towards their national identity and neighbour countries of Turkey. Based on qualitative research methodology, participants consisted of 73 pre-service social studies teachers at a university located in the western part of Turkey. The selection of pre-service teachers was based on purposeful sampling with no gender-specific selection. A questionnaire was developed based on qualitative means which included open-ended questions regarding the pre-service social studies teachers' perceptions of both national identity and neighbour states of Turkey. They also created metaphors for those countries. In conclusion, it is seen that for Turkish pre-service social studies teachers being a Turkish citizen equalled kinship, loyalty to historical heritage, patriotism and duties towards own nation. In the case of neighbour countries, they could present less knowledge about those countries.

Keywords: national identity, neighbour country, social studies, pre-service social studies teachers

1. Introduction

In Baldacchino (2011)'s article, the relationship between the individual and the state is explained in three manners. First of all are the communities like Basques, Québécois, Cree Indians that consider themselves nations, but which are not recognized as such by others or are not granted the legitimacy and mechanisms of fully-fledged states. He called the seconds "*cleft states*" that are a collection of two or more distinguishable, often ethnic, groups. In this kind of state, usually, loyalty to the clan/nation assumes priority. He adduced Malta in the third category and called this category "*states without nations*" in which there is no interplay between different ethnic groups within the same state, or between states; no 'minority-majority' relationship; no conflict between a dominating

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and a dominated ethnic group. Then he estimated the EU membership as an opportunity for Malta to think, at long last, of themselves in relation to an external other.

According to Triandafyllidou (1998), the world is divided into nations which are the only legitimate source of political power and the whole perception by each individual of the surrounding world is based on the distinction between the in-group, namely the nation, and the foreigners, those belonging to other communities, the 'others'. As Petersoo (2007) said the concept of the other is increasingly popular which usually proposes the existence of one significant other for any national self, and that this other is usually threatening and negative. Triandafyllidou (1998) writes that 'the history of each nation is marked by the presence of significant others that have influenced the development of its identity by means of their "threatening" presence. Nation-states are defined differently from one another by traits, stereotypes and national characteristics through otherness. Nations sometimes use stereotypes to define their boundaries (Kuzio, 2001). These stereotypes are generally context-dependent and people talk of both their national identity and the others in terms of the context in which they are presented. This theory is called self-categorization and views category identity as inherently relational and conceives of stereotyping as being bound up with capturing the meaning of one category in relation to another (Hopkins and Murdoch, 1999). Sometimes people even in the same country define different people or nations as others. Kuzio (2001)'s article is an example of this which shows that four groups in Ukrainian politics have different Russia and the West perceptions. Thus, identities do not have to be perceived as negative and mutually hostile, but they do need to be perceived as different and as contributing to the crystallization of particular national identity in one way or another.

We must go to the past centuries to understand what do "we" and the "others" mean to people. If we analyze the thoughts of Greek philosophers, we can see that asked how each of them was held together and differed from others. For Plato, the identity of the polis lay in the way it defined and organized itself for the pursuit of the good life. His view was broadly accepted by Aristotle and others. A different view of national identity emerged in the seventeenth century and Hobbes rejected the possibility of the collectively shared conception of the good life. He emphasized the shared conception of legitimacy and located the identity in its formal and autonomously constituted structure of authority. Locke, Rousseau and many others shared his views in varying degrees. The rise of nationalist ideas in the nineteenth century marked the emergence of a very different view of national identity. For the nationalist writers every polity namely, the nation was an organic whole and distinguished by a unique spirit and this soul gave life to its institutions. This nationalist soul also distinguished the nation from others (Parekh, 1994). National identity has once again become a subject of the debate in many countries together with notions of globalism.

Medrano and Koenig (2005) also indicate that we actually know little about how a nation defines itself and how such definitions impact social relations between "us" and "the others". Thus, this study is an attempt to present how Turkish people define both themselves and their neighbours and how this definition affects their attitudes towards

them. One of the primary goals of the social studies course is to develop students' civic competency and social understanding. It aims to enhance students' ability to understand the social world and their place in it and, helps to prepare children as citizens who have the necessary skills to be able to effectively participate in civic life. How people define themselves and others is important and effective in creating views towards nations. Thus, children need to understand not only their nation but also other nations to be able to become informed, reasoned and competent citizens capable of meeting the demands and challenges of the 21st century. Neighbour countries are especially important because of both their proximity and cultural interaction. In this context, teachers should be good models to regulate their students' behaviour. Therefore, it is important to research their cognition of neighbours. Hence, the purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service social studies teachers' perceptions of the neighbouring countries of Turkey.

2. Literature Review

National identity is a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and sharing most of the features that make it different from others (Guibernau, 1997). In this study, this term means a common history, culture, language, and destiny. According to Guirbenau (1997), national identity has five dimensions. These are psychological, cultural, territorial, political and historical. The psychological dimension arises from the consciousness of forming a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related. The internalization of national identity results in individuals charging it emotionally. Political leaders are totally aware of the power of the national identity and generally call people to action and sacrifice in the face of threats to the nation. As mentioned above, the cultural dimension is another element of national identity. Values, beliefs, customs, habits and practices are important in nations and they are transmitted to the new members. Through traditions, all members whatever their origins or socio-economic backgrounds come together and united in a single nation. Members of a nation tend to feel proud of their ancient roots and generally interpret them as a sign of resilience, strength and even superiority when compared with other nations. History provides the members of the nation with a collective memory filled with events and experiences that allow people to increase self-esteem by feeling as do members of the community who has proved capable of great things and which might be ready once again. All nations evoke some natures that make them special. History contributes to the construction of a certain image of the nation. In the territorial dimension, Guirbenau (1997) suggested that people who had access to education acquired a much more accurate sense of the territorial boundaries of the nation. Besides, an individual's identity is defined by the roles he or she played within the related territory. The political aspect of the national identity is related to the actions of the state destined to construct a cohesive society through a homogeneous citizenry.

National identity is clearly an extremely potent force in the modern world. They are so potent because they are usually objectified and reified and, extraordinarily

pervasive (Barrett, 2000). The importance of the national identity is explained by Barrett (2000) as follows:

... things that are associated with our national identity are permeate just about every aspect of our everyday lives, from the language we speak through to the food that we eat, from the weather forecasts which we watch on the television through the events which we read about in our newspapers, from the clothes that we wear through to the lifestyles that we lead, from the types of landscapes to which we feel a curious kind of emotional attachment through to the characteristic architecture of the house in which we live.

Research based on xenophobia has suggested that national identity is empirically related to the negative sentiments of individuals toward foreigners. Thus, we should consider that negative sentiment when we talk about national identity and others. Lewin-Epstein and Levanon (2005) expand this approach in their research and they said that in deeply divided societies like Israel, national identity itself might have different meanings among different social groups. Their analysis of data on Israeli society showed that members of dominant ethnic groups ascribed higher importance to the national identification than members of subordinate ethnic groups and they perceived the national identity based on ancestral terms while marginal ethnic groups tended to associate it with cultural elements (Lewin-Epstein and Levanon, 2005).

Despite the importance of national identity in our lives, we don't normally think about it during our everyday business. However, they come to the surface especially we think about other national identities. Thus, in this study national identity takes apart with perceptions towards other national identities because otherness and the national identity define who we are and they are closely related. As cited by Medrano and Koenig, the role of national identity in explaining social and political phenomena in the early 1970 and citizenship is among them. Then, the early 1990s were characterised by a shift in research from nationalism to citizenship, and within the field of citizenship studies from a purely Marshallian focus, centered on the breadth of civil, political and economic rights (Marshall 1964), to a Weberian focus on citizenship as an institution of both inclusion and exclusion (Medrano and Koenig, 2005).

The basis of otherness can vary considerably in different situations. This kind of research is done basically on multicultural issues and generally about immigrants. Research shows us that our attitudes and behaviors towards others are clarified in either individual or group-level processes. The former depends on personality while the latter directs attention to cultural traits. According to the self-interest model, we can talk about unemployment, low income and deteriorating living conditions as sources of inter-ethnic hostility. In this context, people perceive out-group members as representing a greater threat to their well-being. In the second model, inter-ethnic hostility is based on socially learning feelings and that feeling is shaped by cultural ideas and out-group stereotypes, which are reinforced in the context of superficial contact.

To understand neighboring countries people, need to understand themselves as both citizens and a part of their countries. It means that the neighbors or the “others” become meaningful only through the contrast with the national identity. Besides, as we can understand from its’ definition, identity is only operative with its’ opposite because it means the same (Petersoo, 2007). So, we need others to be ourselves. In Smith’s book (1991) self, in a word identity is explained by Oedipus and his effort to find out who he was. Self is composed of multiple identities and one of them is national identity. People need to be a part of and belong to a group and a nation is among that group. A nation can be defined as a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members (Smith, 1991).

3. Material and Methods

In this study qualitative method has been applied. Qualitative research, broadly defined, means *“any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of quantification”* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the *“phenomenon of interest unfold naturally”* (Patton, 2002). This means that qualitative researchers generally study a phenomenon in an open-ended way, without prior expectations, and they develop hypotheses and theoretical explanations that are based on their interpretations of what they observe (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). This kind of research allows the researcher to familiarize him/herself with the problem or concept to be studied, and perhaps generate a hypothesis to be tested (Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative reports are detailed narratives that include the voices of the participants being studied (Hatch, 2002).

3.1 Sample/Research Group

In this study, national identity and neighbor country perceptions of pre-service social studies teachers and their knowledge about them are found. Due to this, the research group was formed of 73 pre-service social studies teachers who were enrolled in a state university in Turkey. The selection of pre-service teachers was based on purposeful sampling with no gender-specific selection. The cohort that began the citizenship course in the 2019 spring term consisted of 73 pre-service social studies teachers (females 40 and 33 males). Those are selected as participants of this research because; it was thought that if the researcher understood participants’ perspectives in a natural context and spent enough time with those participants in those contexts, they might feel confident while the researcher was capturing their views (Hatch, 2002).

3.2 Data Collection Tool

A data collection tool was developed based on qualitative means which included open-ended questions regarding the pre-service social studies teachers’ knowledge and perceptions about their national identity and the neighbor countries.

This questionnaire was designed to assess the subjects' knowledge and perceptions of their national identity and the neighbor countries. It was a qualitative questionnaire that included mostly open-ended questions and consisted of both open and close-ended items to extract the approaches of this group of pre-service social studies teachers.

3.3 Data Collection

Participants of the research took a citizenship course during their fourth term in their program of study. During the course, participants had opportunities to analyze and discuss citizenship and national identity. In this course, pre-service teachers are also asked to some specific readings both about citizenship and national identity. These readings also gave the participants a chance to rethink these issues. After that process, 73 pre-service social studies teachers answered the questions in the questionnaire. It was administered to the subjects to take their opinions about national identity and the neighbor countries.

3.4 Data Analyze

Quantitative data were analyzed through the content analyze technique. The written data obtained from interview questions were read to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. Notes and general thoughts about data were written in the margins at this stage. Similar topics were clustered together. Member-checking was used to determine the accuracy of the findings. Figures were used to convey the findings of the analysis, the section intended to contain a detailed description of all the methods, materials, collaborators and participants in the study. The protocols used for data acquisition, techniques and procedures, investigated parameters, methods of measurements and apparatus should be described in sufficient detail to allow other scientists to understand, analyze and compare the results. The study subjects and participants should be described in terms of number, age and sex. The statistical methods should be described in detail to enable verification of the reported results.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Turkish Citizenship

Kinship (f=65) is an important concept that participants of the study expressed in the context of their national identity. They thought that all people in Turkey were inter-related because of their common ancestors. Thus, loyalty to historical heritage (f=63) was the other common statement in the context of Turkish citizenship which was said by social studies pre-service teachers.

Atatürk's' principles, honor, freedom, rights and responsibilities, democracy, independency, nationalism, patriotism and respect for differences are the other themes that are ascertained from statements of pre-service social studies teachers. Among them, freedom (f=62), rights and responsibilities (f=57), honor (f=55) and patriotism (f=48) are

commonly used. One of the participants (Berna) expressed her opinions about being a Turkish citizen as follows: *“We have many duties and responsibilities as citizens. Turkish citizenship makes me think that those duties and responsibilities. Besides, it is a big honor for me to be a Turkish citizen.”*

It is seen that all the citizenship conceptions of the student teachers in this study were passive and corresponded to closed notions of community, duties and obligations regarding community and the state. They were repeating widely accepted terms about being a Turkish citizen. Despite this common view, some of the participants expressed their opinions on citizenship in relation to Atatürk’s principles (f=20), democracy (f=17) and respect for others (f=7). Social studies pre-service teachers who signified Atatürk and his principles in the context of Turkish citizenship identified it with democracy. Thus, we can interpret this as democracy and democratic citizenship concepts connected to Atatürk and his principles in their minds.

Participants of this study didn’t state any negative terms toward Turkish identity and Turkish citizenship although some of them have ethnic differences. Fighting for freedom and independence are the common senses of Turkish citizenship and history and the culture are strong glues that combine everyone into one. Pre-service social studies teachers in this research identified national identity in terms of national citizenship and thought that every citizen in Turkey had equal rights and ethnicity was not a decisive factor in identifying people as Turkish or not. One of the participants (Müge) explained it as follows: *“All people in Turkey have equal rights and ethnicity has nothing to do with this. Even though I’m not Turkish by means of ethnicity, I’m Turkish because of my identity.”*

It is interesting that nobody in this study explained national identity and citizenship in terms of religion. Of course, citizenship and national identity are about state and not related to religion but, some people identify themselves by prioritizing their religion. In this research, language and land are also not mentioned in the context of citizenship and national identity. Besides, participants presented national identity in a collective sense rather than individualistic issues and loyalty to the state was the most common understanding of national identity. Freedom was an important factor in their national identity definitions and it could be related to their thoughts that if anyone was not free, we couldn’t ask him to talk about national identity. Thus, this result shows us that they don’t explain it in a militarist and racist manner. If we talk with the terms of Guibernau (1997), national identity is presented by them only with its’ political and historical dimensions and cultural, territorial and psychological dimensions were ignored. This instantiates the history’s effect on national identity perceptions and its’ contributions to the construction of a certain image of the nation.

5. Knowledge about Neighbors

5.1 Knowledge about Northwest Neighbors

Greece and Bulgaria are the northwest neighbors of Turkey. Participants of this research talked about history and conflicts when asked to say something about Greece. Ancient

Greek Culture (f=54), Byzantine Empire (f=51) and World War I (f=50) were the common themes. They mentioned Ancient Greek History in terms of philosophy and ancient civilizations. One of the participants (Burcu) stated that: *“Greece makes me think about Greek philosophers. That country has a strong background in this context. Besides, many ruins in our country are inherited from ancient Greek civilization.”* Byzantine Empire and İstanbul are the other concepts which are addressed by participants of this research. They identified Greece with Byzantine Empire and talked about the collapse of this empire proudly because of İstanbul and its’ conqueror Fatih Sultan Mehmet.

World War I and the struggles between Turkish and Greek armies have created the main understanding of Greece. Especially the battles during the Turkish Independence War have formed the “enemy” image in participants’ minds. Although Greece and Turkey have many common cultural elements and familiar things participants in this study noticed them and they continued to make references to historical problems. Besides, none of them has ever been to Greece and has ever met with a Greek people but they have negative attitudes towards that country because of diplomatic issues.

Exchange of population during the Independence War was the other theme that participants (f=45) of this research stated together with their understanding of the position of Greece in the context of World War I. One of the participants (Canan) highlighted this as follows: *“Many people moved to Greece from our country because of their negative attitudes during World War I and, Turkish people forced to come to Turkey from Greek lands. They have many bad memories.”*

This negativeness leads to negative expectations and most of the participants thought that Greek people were the same and had also negative attitudes towards Turkey and Turkish people. Mete stated that: *“I think that it is the same for Greek people and they don’t like us. Yes, I know that we can’t generalize people but for every political or diplomatic issue, Greek people maintain their negative attitudes. For example, Eurovision is a remarkable event which proves this, they always give fewer points to our country.”* Greece is also known as a country in economic crises (f=62) by the majority of the participants. Begum said: *“Greece is in an economic crisis. Generally, they have problems economically.”*

Greece is known for its natural beauties and tourism potential in the world but none of the pre-service social studies teachers could talk about them and when the researcher reminded that beauties, they still continued to reveal them with historical events. For example, Greek Islands were seen as a problematic areas like Cyprus. Although they have little knowledge about the historical background and current situation of those issues, it is seen that their prejudices and stereotypes dominated their views.

It is seen that pre-service social studies teachers in this study generally showed negative attitudes although they had less knowledge about that country. Athens was the only city they remembered even though Thessaloniki’s importance. It is the city where Atatürk was born but none of them linked it with Greece.

However, Greece is the only country which was presented not just with political and historical dimensions but also with cultural and geographical conditions that were handled.

Bulgaria was the second neighbor country that pre-service social studies teachers ask to speak about their knowledge about the country and it is seen that, they knew less about Bulgaria. Migration from Bulgaria at the end of the 1980s (f=70) and the Turkish minority still living there (f=57) were the main themes that they mentioned. For example, Burcu said: *“I know that Bulgarian government tyrannized over Turkish minority in Bulgaria and forced them to move to Turkey. I’m living in Bursa and many immigrants from Bulgaria are living there. We have neighbors and they said that the Bulgarian government tried to change their names and religion.”* It is seen that those bad memories made a big impression in peoples’ minds even many people got knowledge about those issues through oral history. Tuna explained his ideas as follows: *“I haven’t got many words about Bulgaria; I only know that it is our neighbor and I remember the oppression towards Turkish minority. My parents told me and have seen something on the net, people had bad days.”*

Capital city Sofia (f=63) was the only city which they knew in Bulgaria even though they heard about many cities in Bulgaria in their history classes, especially in the case of the Ottoman Empire. Communism (f=43) and Balkan Wars (f=39) were the others that participants stated about Bulgaria.

In general, participants of this research presented their knowledge about Bulgaria in the context of the history but not related them to the current situation. They didn’t state things like tourism (especially skiing), Bulgaria’s political position in terms of the European Union and the economic relationship between Turkey and Bulgaria.

5.2 Knowledge about East and South East Neighbors

Iraq, Iran and Syria are the east and southeast neighbors of Turkey. When I asked about their knowledge of those countries’ social studies pre-service teachers in this research stated various things but generally relevant to the war. Saddam Hussein (f=70), the USA (f=60), Iraq-Iran War (f=52) and the Gulf War (f=43) were the mostly stated words about Iraq. It is seen that Saddam Hussein was the common theme that almost all of the participants formed their knowledge about Iraq and they related the USA with this knowledge. For example, Murat said: *“I know Saddam about Iraq and USA’s intervention to Iraq. Death of Saddam. The USA still interferes in the internal affairs of that country. Iraq couldn’t be an independent country throughout history, England dominated it before and now the USA is there.”*

Mosul and Kirkuk (f=52) were the cities they knew in addition to the capital city Bagdad (f=71). They know these cities because of the historical and current problems in the north part of Iraq. Musa stated that: *“Iraq was under the domination of Ottoman History and today Mosul and Kirkuk are places that many Turkish people still live.”* Ceyda also mentioned the cities of Iraq and said: *“Bagdad is the capital city of Iraq and I know nothing about the other cities in Iraq. Maybe, Mosul and Kirkuk but that’s all, I know only their names.”*

Oil (f=40) was the other common knowledge in the case of Iraq. Seda mentioned that: *“Iraq has many oil resources and Turkey gets oil from Iraq.”* We can relate this theme with the economic dimension but citations show us that they actually don’t know the economic relations between the two countries.

Iran was the other neighbor country I asked to present their knowledge about and, nuclear weapons (f=64), sharia (f=59) and underground resources (f=43) were the most popular themes in this category. The majority of the pre-service social studies teachers in this research presented Iran in its current position the contrary to other neighbor countries. They didn’t say things from history but talked about technological developments and religious rules in Iran. Ayşe stated that: *“Iran is great power in the world and many countries are scared because of that power. If Iran uses it, the power balance of the world will change but states like UK and USA don’t let this.”*

Khomeini (f=34) and Teheran (f=33) were the other concepts that participants of this study gave information about. Actually, they knew that Khomeini was the leader of that country and Teheran was the capital city but didn’t know anymore. İlknur stated that: *“I heard about Khomeini was the religious and political leader of Iran and they respected to him. His pictures are still everywhere even in textbooks. The other thing that I know about Iran is the capital city Teheran. I watched a documentary about that city, it is valuable because of its historical beauties.”*

It is seen that social studies pre-service teachers in this research knew less about Iran than other neighbors of Turkey and most of their knowledge was second hand. The last neighbor country located in the south-east part of Turkey and asked about to participants was Syria. Syria differs from others because of its’ special situation and refugees living in Turkey. Almost all of the participants introduced Syria in the context of war (f=71) and refugees (f=68) with a negative attitude. For example, Mehmet stated that: *“Syria is in a civil war and people moved to our country from Syria. I know that they were in danger but they have no right to move anywhere in case of war. They must fight and defend themselves instead of move to our country. They put our country and people in a difficult position.”*

Their expressions showed that many of them knew just the name and the capital city of Syria before the civil war. Now, their understanding of that country changed with reference to civil war and refugees. Unfortunately, the majority of them had negative attitudes towards refugee people although they tried to be objective. Immigration and refugees reminded them of the border (f=42) between Turkey and Syria and battles in that area because of the civil war. Hatay (f=23) was the other theme they stated and this city is mentioned by them both because of its historical place and current problems. Emir talked about this issue and said: *“Border between Syria and Turkey is a battlefield today although we were close friends before. Turkish soldiers died because of the civil war in Syria regardless of people moved to Turkey instead of stayed their country for a fight.”* Betül was one of the participants who related Syria with Hatay and said: *“People have seen Syria as an old friend but Hatay was a problematic area in history and I think that they still want to get it.”*

The majority of them related Syria with Bassar Asad (f=38) but couldn't consider his position in the civil war. Ali stated that: *"Actually, I don't know what was happening in Syria and why Asad is the bad guy. Because we were friends before and I can't explain the problem."* However, some of the participants (f=14) said negative things about Asad depending on news on the net and on Tv. Esra was one of them and said: *"People moved to our country because of Asad. He wants to control all people in Syria and manipulate all."*

These statements showed that participants of this research dealt with the Syrian case from civil war and refugee aspects although they didn't analyze it scientifically and without getting reliable knowledge about what is happening in Syria.

5.3 Knowledge about North East Neighbors

Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia are the countries located in the northeast part of Turkey and Azerbaijan and Georgia were popular among social studies pre-service teachers although they knew less especially about Georgia. They have positive attitudes toward Azerbaijan and Georgia on the contrary of Armenia. However, they only knew that Georgia was a state which was built after the collapse of the USSR (f=65) and its' capital city was Tbilisi (f=53). For example, Müge stated that: *"Georgia is a familiar state to us, I know that it is among states that are built after the collapse of USSR, I don't know any other but it is familiar."* Aslı also said: *"Georgia is a good neighbor state, we are friends and have similar culture... I know Tbilisi about it and collapse of USSR, I mean it is a newly founded state."* Besides, Georgia is mentioned for its' tourism potential by social studies pre-service teachers and Batumi (f=68) was the most highlighted city. Some of the participants talked about their visits to Batumi during Black Sea tours. Turkish people can visit Georgia without a passport and many people who are joining on a trip to the east part of the Black Sea region of Turkey generally visit Batumi even if it is only such hours. Thus, there were people who visited Batumi and Ercan was one of them who said: *"I know Batumi the touristic city in Georgia and I visited there two years ago."*

Azerbaijan was the most favorite neighboring country that pre-service social studies teachers in this research talked about although they had little information about that country. Nakhichevan (f=64), autonomy (f=37) and blood hood (f=69) were all information they knew about Azerbaijan. Sibel talked about her information about Azerbaijan like this: *"Azerbaijan and Turkey are brothers. Among our neighbors, it is the only friend. Now, I noticed that I know little about that country but I know that we are brothers."* Özgür stated like Sibel: *"People in Azerbaijan are Turkish and we are brothers. We have the same language and culture."* Betül said about Azerbaijan: *"I remembered Nakhichevan, I'm not sure but I know that it is an autonomous district."*

Armenia was the last neighbor county which asked pre-service social studies teachers to present their knowledge about that country it is seen that they were negative about that country. However, it was interesting that they knew more about Armenia than their favorite states like Georgia and Azerbaijan. World War I (f=63) and the Armenian Genocide (f=73) were the common information that they knew about Armenia. The Armenian Genocide was mentioned by all of the participants. Efe said about this issue:

“Armenian people were living together with Turkish people in Ottoman Empire but they caused to problems during World War I and National Independence War, and Turkish government forced them for immigration. It was a necessity because of their attitudes. Today, they still continue to do this and try to tarnish Turkey’s image.” Aynur stated that: *“We were living together in peace during the Ottoman Empire period, but they didn’t obey the rules in World War I and collaborated with our enemies. Thus, their immigration is not a genocide.”* Nagorno Karabag (f=36) was mentioned by the participants of this research in the context of Armenia and it was stated as a problem caused by Armenia. Pelin stated that: *“Armenia causes problems in Nagorno Karabag. The political struggle for Karabag has damaged our relations because Azerbaijan is our brother country. Besides, the Armenian Diaspora has efforts against Turkey and Azerbaijan.”* Armenian Diaspora (f=47) was highlighted by the majority of the participants during interviews and they stated their views towards diasporas’ negative attitude towards our country. They also emphasized the power of the Armenian Diaspora in the international arena. For example, Melih said that: *“the Armenian Diaspora has strong relations with governments of European countries and impresses them against Turkey. They try to make them accept genocide. Europe is with them, Armenian people in Europe have power because of money.”*

6. Images of Neighbors

We have seen that the historical dimension of the national identity is effective on participants’ neighbor images. Creating common enemies is a strategy generally employed by the state to construct a national identity. The prosecution of war has proven crucial to the emergence and consolidation of a sense of community among citizens united against an external threat. Participants of this research presented their images towards neighbor countries generally based on their national identity, and friend and enemy perceptions.

In the case of Greece, participants of this study stated their images as mythology (f=63), philosopher (f=54), naughty kid (f=51) and brain (f=43). They stated images about philosophy and mythology because of the Ancient Greece period. When we compared these images with their knowledge about Greece, it is seen that their Greece images were based on ancient times although their knowledge was generally dependent on World War I and the Turkish Independence War. Besides, their sentences and talking styles were not negative as their views during the information parts of the interviews. They talked moderately and shared their positive views toward the future. For example, Gözde said: *“Greece is a philosopher for me because of the ancient period. Many philosophers were born and lived there; philosophy was born in Greece.”* Similar to Gözde, Mert stated that: *“In ancient times, Greek philosophers had great effects on humanity. Greece is the birthplace of democracy and civilization. Ancient Greece must owe European people’s thanks.”*

Participants of this research were pre-service social studies teachers and it is seen that their images of Greece were shaped by their departments because they have taught issues on democracy, human rights and philosophy and they used that knowledge in this case.

Bulgaria is presented as migratory birds (f=55), bridge (f=53), silence (f=41) and closed box (f=32) by social studies pre-service teachers. The migratory bird image is common because of the immigrants who came to Turkey during the 1980s. Our participants knew that event although they were younger than that generation who had memories. Cem said about Bulgaria: *"Migratory birds visualizing when I'm thinking about Bulgaria. Turkish people moved to our country because treated badly towards them."* Besides, Merve presented her views: *"I remember Naim Süleymanoğlu and migration from that country. People have been forced to move to Turkey like migratory birds."*

The bridge was the second common term that participants stated in the context of their images about Bulgaria. They explained the reason for this image with Bulgaria's location. Barış said about this: *"Bulgaria is a bridge between Turkey and Europe. We pass to Europe over Bulgaria."* Silence and closed box images originated from Bulgaria's inactive passion for European policy and participants of this research explained their hesitant manner toward that country. Melis stated that: *"I'm not sure about Bulgaria, when we look at the historical process Bulgaria was generally against us, but that countries' current position is like a closed box, you can never know what it covers unless you open it."* According to Ata: *"Bulgaria is a secret country, sometimes good, sometimes bad but generally in bad behavior toward Turkish people. We are neighbors but I couldn't decode that country."*

When we talked about the east and south-east neighbors, Iraq is seen as a puzzle (f=63), battle tank (f=55), time bomb (f=43), oil well (f=42) and a pion (f=37) by social studies pre-service teachers. They mentioned that country with a puzzle image because of the complicated position of that country. Mete stated that: *"Iraq is like a puzzle-like other middle east countries, various ethnicities are living there historically. That puzzle was never been finished because European countries and USA always mixed the parts."* However, some of the participants like Ege thought that Iraq was a puzzle not just because of it is located but also because the population of Iraq caused it. Ege said: *"People move to other countries from Iraq and they don't try to solve their problems. A puzzle can be finished and people can see it as one piece but I think that people in Iraq don't let that puzzle to be completed."*

Participants imagined Iraq as a battle tank and time bomb because of the wars Iraq has experienced. Mine stated that: *"Iraq has a great history and it is a strong civilization but it is equal to war for a long time. It is like a time bomb which could explode anytime."* Bilge added her opinions: *"Battle tank comes to my mind when I think about Iraq because there is always a war in Iraq and battle tanks are around."* Participants visualized Iraq with an oil well and its reason is clear and connected with oil wells in Iraq. Müge explained it as follows: *"Iraq is an oil well for me, countries in the world are also aware of this and want to benefit from its advantages. Wars in Iraq are dependent on this reality."* Iraq is seen as a pion by some of the participants because of its diplomacy. They thought that European countries exploit Iraq and provoke Middle East countries like Iran and Kuwait. Yunus stated that: *"Iraq is a pion and European countries direct it according to their political aims. Throughout history, Great Britain exploited that country and used its resources and now the USA does it."*

Iran is evaluated as a hand bomb (f=49), nuclear weapon (f=34) and bully boy (f=21) images by participants. This country is seen as a hand bomb because of its political effect

in the international arena. They mentioned the power of Iran on a global scale and visualized it as a bully boy depending on the rebellious and insistent attitude of Iran. Anıl declared that: *“Iran is a strong country, its’ history, civilization and nuclear power. Those keep it going and strengthen its position globally. But, it is like a hand bomb and could be exploded somewhere.”* Mustafa said: *“It is a bully boy who stands up to the whole world and doesn’t pull back”*. Iran is visualized with a nuclear weapon image based on its’ nuclear power. Özge stated that: *“Iran has a big nuclear power and could use it against other countries and they scared of this. Thus, anybody tempts to intervene in events in Iran.”*

Syria is visualized with refugee (f=69), broken family (f=52) and boiling cauldron (f=47) images by participants. The reasons for those images are very clear because of the current situation of this country and refugees moving to Turkey. Negative attitudes towards that country continued during interviews about country images and Efe stated that: *“Refugees are all around us and they don’t intend to turn back to their country. It is a responsibility to stay in your country in any case and defense it but the Syrian people don’t do it. I can’t understand them”*. Buse explained her views: *“People from Syria came to our country and they have many problems with adaptation. I understand that being a refugee is not easy for anyone but also it is not easy to be a host.”*

The broken family is the second most popular image in this category and is related to the refugee image. Berke said: *“People have problems because they left some of their family members and friends in their country. This causes behavioral problems and they also have emotional and social problems.”* It is seen that participants of this research matched the country with people in the case of Syria and answered questions about this country in the context of the population who moved to other countries because of the war that occurred in their country. Syria is seen as a boiling cauldron which could be over and damaged others, especially Turkey. One of the participants (Onur) explained it as follows: *“Syria doesn’t calm down and boil any time. It scared me”*.

Georgia is seen as a friend (f=43) and visualized as a silence (f=21) by social studies pre-service teachers. As I explained in the information part of this research, they could mention limited images about this country and I think that it is the result of their ignorance about Georgia. Interestingly they expressed their views and images about Georgia in a good manner even though they have little about it. Metin stated that: *“I noticed that I had little about Georgia but this country sounded good to me. Georgia is a friend country.”* Buse said: *“Georgia is a friend on my mind. We don’t have problems.”* Besides, Georgia has a silent image for some of them. Murat stated his views: *“There is nothing on my mind about Georgia, so I can only imagine it with a silence.”* According to this citation, we can relate this image to their illiteracy but this image is also related to the inactive position of Georgia in the global arena. Melis explained it as follows: *“Georgia isn’t active on a world scale; thus, this country is equal with a silence for me.”*

Azerbaijan is of course discussed with a positive attitude and visualized with well-behaved child (f=43) and brother (f=41) images. It is seen that participants of this research could say less about this country although they mentioned their positive feelings. Brother image for Azerbaijan is common among Turkish people and social studies pre-service

teachers repeated that common view. Mete said: *“Azerbaijan is our brother country; we are the same and in common action. We are all together for any issue and help each other.”* Azerbaijan is seen as a well-behaved child because of its’ problem-free attitude both to Turkey and the whole world. Burcu said: *“I have never heard of a problem that Azerbaijan caused. It is unproblematic.”*

The last country for which I asked the pre-service social studies teachers to explain their views and images was Armenia. This country is presented with cunning fox (f=44), parrot (f=40), broken record (f=32) and spoiled kid (f=23) images. It is a cunning fox according to them because of the attempts against Turkey in the global arena. They mean the deportation of Armenian people during our independence war and the Armenian people’s attempts to enforce both Turkey and the world that it was a genocide. Arda said: *“Armenia is unreliable and doesn’t behave friendly It is so wily as a fox and we must be careful”*. This country is visualized as a parrot because of their persistence in the context of genocide. Selim stated that: *“Armenia continues to speak about genocide allegations in all areas globally. They don’t get bored. I think they only know that issue and can’t talk about any other like a parrot. A parrot can say too few words and repeats these words continuously.”* Besides, Armenia is visualized with a broken record because for the same reason. Eda stated: *“Armenia is a like a broken record, always repeating the same.”* It is interesting that child image was common in the manner of three different neighbors. The first of them was Greece which is seen as a naughty child by social studies pre-service teachers and the second was Azerbaijan with its’ well-behaved child image among them. Armenia is seen as a spoiled kid which was get spoiled by European countries and USA. Anıl said that: *“European countries spoiled that country because they supported Armenian claims. Thus, Armenian people think that can do anything in the global arena.”*

7. Recommendations

Own life experience may serve as a basis for good neighborliness and in this study, none of the participants said something about their visits on neighbor countries (except short visits to Batumi). Thus, it is suggested that if youth students have a chance to go to other countries and get their own life experiences this will ensure a strong basis for objective attitudes. Because in today’s political world any democratic country solely relies on military and economic powers and it is also important to get interactions with other countries.

This is a kind of diplomacy called by Cummings (2003) cultural diplomacy and described as *“the exchange of ideas, information, art and the other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding”*. Our participants presented their views in this manner and the majority of them highlighted neutrality and globalism, and in the context of the education for good neighborliness they shared their ideas about getting more knowledge about each other. They thought that, if we knew more about each other we would be more positive and friendly. Exchanges between people in different countries and learning about the culture and the culture and society of the

foreign country could have benefits for good neighborliness. In the case of Israel, according to studies done by Saxe, even three years after the trip 61 percent of Birthright alumni said they felt very connected to Israel and 71 percent felt a strong connection to the Jewish people (cited in Appel, Irony, Schmerz and Ziv, 2008).

Germany and France are other examples of cultural diplomacy for good neighborliness. Today the two countries maintain close diplomatic relations although, in the early part of the last century, France and Germany were fierce enemies, engaged in wars and violent conflicts. After Elysée Treaty, the two countries have closer cooperation and recognize the importance that knowledge of each other's language and organizations and intuitions found to succeed in making friends out of enemies (Appel, Irony, Schmerz and Ziv, 2008). Thus, it is suggested that educational and cultural cooperation among neighbor countries could facilitate the interactions and make this process more peaceful and friendly.

8. Conclusion

Even though the debates on how globalization and transnational migration are transforming the structure and meaning of citizenship, national citizenship is still a core theme and people are keeping to encourage their national identities. National identity perceptions of people in any country differ depending on various variables. Age is one of them and especially among citizens of multi-ethnic countries and the populations of Eastern European countries after the Soviet Union period have distinct differences between the age groups in the understanding of national identity. For example, in the Georgian context, the youth generation defines Georgian identity in terms of citizenship while adult and senior generations. Besides, the adult and the senior generations do not have any pre-conditions for establishing diplomatic and friendly relations with Moscow while the only time youth prefer diplomatic relations with Russia is if Russia de-occupies Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Galdava, 2015).

Equality, freedom, social order, national security, a world at peace, respect for tradition, respect for privacy, social justice, independence, protecting the environment, loyalty, obedient, helpful, and responsible are common words that participants of several research (Akar and Aschenberger, 2016; Yiğit, 2016) about Turkish citizenship introduced us. It is seen from here that, Turkish people's citizenship perceptions are mainly emphasized public good over individual benefits, collectivity over self-interest and responsibilities over rights. It is the same with the conceptions of China's citizenship that are introduced by Lee (2005). Lee also shows a strong emphasis on national identity, nationalism and patriotism despite the initiatives toward liberal citizenship. In our study it was similar and the majority of our participants discussed citizenship in the context of collectivity, public good and responsibilities. Even though, ideas towards liberalism, freedom, rights, individual differences and so on, since the 21st century in Turkey, it was seen that citizenship perceptions have not changed in a liberal and more democratic way. However, Koutselini (2008) analysed student teachers' citizenship perceptions in Cyprus

and showed an understanding of active citizenship. The majority of the student teachers in his study advocated a form of citizenship relating to community service engagement and civic action to gain power.

Participants' explanations about neighbor countries were underpinned by such concepts as war, tension, exploitation, friendship and globalization. Their perceptions were basically on their historical knowledge which they have learned in school and their main source was television. Besides, they especially have attracted by social media and, their national identity perceptions are shaped by current events. Tensions with neighbor countries formed their conceptions, and globalization has also influenced their national identity notions.

Participants of the study explained their views such as they were honored to be Turkish citizens. Honor is generally a common element of national identity and people feel honored because of their national identities. Barrett (2000) mentioned this honor as national pride and exemplified it with emotional responses which swept across the nation whenever national teams played games with each other. Many people also take great pride in the unique artistic and cultural heritage of their nation but in my research, none of the participants talked about them.

I saw that the majority of the participants discussed on neighbor countries in the context of their historical characteristics. They didn't state the traits like habits, customs, social practices, etc. which are supposed to be common to all members of each country. Opposite to this people generally pertain to their political or public life but define personal characteristics.

National stereotypes came into our participants' minds when I asked them to give some knowledge about each neighbor of Turkey. Guibernau (1997) said stereotypes have an origin and they direct us to a set of characteristics which are believed to be shared by those who belong to particular nations. In my case, I thought that those stereotypes' origin was history lessons and textbooks although textbooks were at the last row of the table which presented their references of neighbors, because before social media, the Internet and other technological materials people got knowledge from textbooks and especially in history courses and now they share that information through social media.

It is suggested according to the study at hand that national stereotypes are not only about others but also involved in national identity. It is mentioned here because of the national identity perceptions of the participants. Patriotism, rights and responsibilities are common national stereotypes. Our sense of national identity links to our beliefs about how other people, who are not members of our own national group, regard our national group (Barrett, 2000). This case was valid in my study because participants thought that other countries tended to regard the Turkish nation positively but they also thought that most of the other nations had bad intentions towards our territory. This is also binding with their neighbor country images.

Neighbor image of people is affected by various factors and the relationship between two neighbor countries is not static in a time. For example, the relationship between USA and Canada has changed historically based on their political, economic and

global decisions (Richter, 2005). It shows us that people see their neighbors as enemies and their attitudes change toward friendship in a while according to political agenda. Yılmaz and Yiğit (2010) found a similar one in the case of social studies pre-service teachers and it was seen that participants viewed Turkey's neighbors solely in terms of a friend-enemy dichotomy, drawing heavily on their historical knowledge in their explanations which were mainly political in character and focus. Thus, we can say that there is little change in their neighbor country's image and continue to view them as a friend or an enemy based on their historical knowledge. Thus, I can say that throughout the ten years little has changed in the context of neighbor countries' images of pre-service social studies teachers in Turkey. Besides, the geographical closeness of neighbor countries lay out their relationships, especially in international affairs. Tie et al. (2019) explained it in the context of NATO member countries and their research showed us that four-fifths of NATO member countries have been convergent with the UK, but no country's military expenditure is convergent with the US. This result is consistent with convergence theory and the spillover effect. However, the participant of this research didn't consider our neighbor countries on large scale and only mentioned the problems between countries. This result is important because our participants are pre-service social studies teachers and they should be more objective, critical thinkers and sophisticated to educate their students as global citizens. They should handle issues from a large perspective and get more knowledge to evaluate them in a global manner.

Cultural, economic, geographical and political factors are important determinants of views presented about other countries. These factors are also important in international contests like Eurovision where countries should behave objectively without regard to political sensitivities. In this study, some of the participants explained their information and images about neighbor countries like Greece and Azerbaijan in the context of Eurovision. They said Greece was not among our friends and showed it with fewer points at Eurovision. Besides, Azerbaijan is stated as a friend country and mentioned with the high points that were awarded us. Clerides and Stengos (2006) also presented the non-quality related factors at Eurovision. They have examined those factors and showed systematic biases conceal the different considerations beyond the aesthetic quality of the song itself that enter the voting preferences of participant countries and are captured by what we have identified as affinity factors which are variables that measure how each country feels towards another country. There is also a link between denominational belonging, religious practice, and racial intolerance. National contexts also matter greatly: individuals living in Europe's most religious countries, countries with legacies of ethnic-religious conflict and countries with low GDP are significantly more likely to be racially intolerant than those living in wealthier, secular and politically stable countries (Doebler, 2015).

War and terrorism have a negative effect on neighbor country relations and it is seen that the participant of this research dealt with the east and south-east neighbors of Turkey in the context of these issues. Syria was totally evaluated in this manner and Iraq and Iran were presented as countries where war and terrorism generally occurred.

Refugees from those countries and their positions in Turkey were the main factors related to this result. Sousa, Mirza and Verdier (2018) also studied it and security was handled by them as an important factor which plays a role in relationships among neighbor countries.

It is also interesting that none of the participants mentioned any neighbor country with popular artists, songs, novels, films, vocation areas and touristic destinations (except Batumi). However, Russian young students presented their Kazakhstan images as President Nursultan Nazarbayev (80%) and popular singers like Abai and Roza Rynbaeva. Typical Kazakh image in this study was familial, hardworking patriot, disciplined and peaceful collectivist (Narbut and Trotsuk, 2017). Hanan (2006) defined a country's image as a representation of a country's positive or negative standing in media, in terms of a historical, political, economic, military, diplomatic and religious context. In this context, Hobsbawm (1992) using slightly different terminology, writes about present aliens, past aliens, and purely notional aliens (cited in Petersoo, 2007). In this study, it is seen that participants' images toward neighbor countries were generally based on historical, military and diplomatic contexts. However, the strongest image of Japan for Russian students was related to culture and traditions like ikebana, tea ceremony, harakiri, high reverence, high regard for traditions and respect for the original culture. In the students' opinions, the Japanese were able to maintain old traditions and make harmony in their lives. Besides, Japanese students represented Russia related with the geographical and climate-based conditions like cold climatic conditions, cold country, there is a lot of snow, it is always cold, the severe winter, every day it is snowing, low temperature, it is cold whole year and people wear fur caps (Zhilina, 2010). But, in this study cultural and geographical conditions were stated only in the cause of Greece and Georgia.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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