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# The Effect of Political Literacy Level on Political Sensitivity: A Study on Political Science and Public Administration Students

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# Politik Okuryazarlık Düzeyinin Politik Duyarlılığa Etkisi: Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Öğrencileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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**Abstract**

*Political literacy enables individuals to act as informed and conscious citizens by understanding the political environment. It contributes to the ability to actively interpret political information, participate in debates, and make informed decisions. Political sensitivity refers to awareness and responsiveness to the inherently political dimensions and effects of various situations, policies, and practices. Cultural, religious, and economic contexts often shape individuals' political preferences and sensitivities. This study examines how political literacy levels of political science and public administration students affect their political sensitivity. The study population comprises students at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Süleyman Demirel University. Data were collected from 421 students voluntarily through convenience sampling. 'Political Literacy Scale' and 'Political Sensitivity Scale' were used as data collection tools. As a result of the study, the participants' political literacy and political sensitivity levels were found to be high. It was observed that students' sensitivity to religious considerations, one of the sub-dimensions of political sensitivity, was low. As a result of the regression analysis, it was concluded that political literacy dimensions positively and moderately affected political sensitivity dimensions. In addition, it was observed that as the level of political literacy increases, political sensitivity also increases.*

***Keywords:*** *Political literacy, political sensitivity, political knowledge, political attitude, political science and public administration.*

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**Öz**

*Politik okuryazarlık, bireylerin siyasi ortamı anlayarak bilgili ve bilinçli vatandaşlar olarak hareket etmelerini sağlamakta aynı zamanda politik bilgileri aktif olarak yorumlama, tartışmalara katılma ve bilinçli karar alma becerisine katkı sunmaktadır. Politik duyarlılık ise çeşitli durumların, politikaların ve uygulamaların doğası gereği siyasi olan boyutlarına ve etkilerine karşı farkındalık ve tepkisellik anlamına gelmektedir. Bireylerin siyasi tercihleri ve duyarlılıkları, genellikle kültürel, dini ve ekonomik bağlamlar tarafından şekillenmektedir. Araştırmanın amacı, siyaset bilimi ve kamu yönetimi öğrencilerinin politik okuryazarlık düzeylerinin politik duyarlılıklarını nasıl etkilediğini incelemektir. Araştırmanın evrenini Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümünde okuyan öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Evrenden kolayda örneklem yoluyla gönüllülük esasına dayalı olarak 421 öğrenciden veri toplanmıştır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak 'Politik Okuryazarlık Ölçeği' ile 'Politik Duyarlılık Ölçeği' kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda, katılımcıların politik okuryazarlık ve politik duyarlılık düzeyleri yüksek bulunmuştur. Politik duyarlılığın alt boyutlarından olan dini hususlar konusunda öğrencilerin duyarlılıklarının düşük olduğu görülmüştür. Yapılan regresyon analizleri sonucunda politik okuryazarlık boyutlarının politik duyarlılık boyutlarını pozitif ve orta düzeyde etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bunun yanında genel olarak politik okuryazarlık düzeyi arttıkça politik duyarlılık düzeyinin de arttığı görülmüştür.*

***Anahtar Kelimeler:*** *Politik okuryazarlık, politik duyarlılık, politik bilgi, politik tutum, siyaset bilimi ve kamu yönetimi.*

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## 1. Introduction

Political literacy, a concept discussed academically since the 1960s (Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Crick and Porter, 1978), *is an essential component of democratic societies characterized by the ability to interact critically with political processes, civil rights, responsibilities, and political discourse.* Denver and Hands (1990) defined political literacy as knowledge and understanding of political processes and issues that enable people to fulfill their citizen roles effectively. Political literacy encompasses a mix of knowledge, skills, and values that enable individuals to understand the political landscape, engage in political discourse, and act as informed citizens (Güler, 2022; Keegan, 2021; Şan and Dancs, 2024; Şan et al., 2023) while also contributing to the ability to actively interpret political information, participate in debates and make informed decisions (Denver and Hands, 1990). In this context, political literacy can also be defined as the potential for informed political participation. Political literacy emphasizes making informed political choices, understanding rights, and interacting with the government. As a politically literate citizen, the individual actively participates in societal events concerning his or her issues, can understand other people's perspectives, recognize their impact on him or her, and respond to them ethically (Fyfe, 2007). Political literacy cannot be measured directly, but it is assumed that if people are politically literate, they understand party differences and know basic political concepts and facts. The concept includes political expertise, political awareness, and civic competence (Cassel and Lo, 1997). Political literacy is closely related to many concepts, such as political interest, political knowledge, political participation, political expertise, political awareness, political socialization, etc. However, it can be said that political interest, knowledge, and participation are the essential components or conceptual coordinates of political literacy (Dağ and Koçer, 2019).

Political literacy ensures acquiring the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for effective and informed decision-making in democratic participation (Fyfe, 2007). Research shows that higher levels of political literacy directly correlate with voting, political participation, or engagement in community activism (Ashley et al., 2017; Dudley and Gitelson, 2002). Similarly, research shows that politically literate individuals tend to be more civically engaged in various ways, such as voting and activism (Batool and Jabeen, 2017). Without political literacy, individuals are more likely to be influenced by political discourse or misinformation, which can lead to a decrease in voter turnout. Indeed, one study found that students with limited political knowledge were less likely to participate in civic activities such as voting and community engagement, which are essential for a functioning democracy (Vasiliu, 2020). Lack of political interest is cited as the main reason for low turnout rates, especially among young voters (Dağ and Koçer, 2019). Research on female students has emphasized that political literacy is associated with political knowledge and acting ability (Batool and Jabeen, 2017). Similarly, another study highlighted that poor political literacy among women limits their political participation and reinforces gender inequalities (Cender, 2023).

The concept of political responsiveness is generally explained using three models/approaches known as the psychological model (School of Michigan), the economic model (School of Rochester), and the sociological model (School of Columbia) (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Downs, 1957; Campbell et al., 1960; Antunes, 2010). The sociological approach emphasized the importance of social factors such as socioeconomic status and religion on voters' political sentiment (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). The economic approach argued that voters' decisions are rational and guided by self-interest (Downs, 1957). Although the psychological approach focuses on partisanship, it suggests considering factors such as race, ethnicity, candidate, social class, and values to increase voters' political responsiveness (Campbell et al., 1960; Antunes, 2010). Within the boundaries set by these three accepted models and approaches, researchers have tried to identify the factors influencing voters' political sentiment and encourage them to participate actively (Kirmani, et al., 2020). Kirmani et al. (2020) states that political responsiveness research generally focuses on the socioeconomic environment, voter sentiments, information, and risk variables.

Political sensitivity refers to awareness and responsiveness to the inherently political dimensions and effects of various situations, policies, and practices. Political sensitivity is crucial for understanding individuals' participation in political processes, preferences, and responses to social change (Almond and Verba, 1963). It encompasses understanding how political context influences individual behavior and institutional actions. At the core of political sensitivity is the recognition that individuals are influenced by the political environment in which many actions and decisions occur. Moreover, political sensitivity is a personal trait that shapes how individuals interpret political stimuli and react to political issues in their environment (Brenner and Inbar, 2014). High political sensitivity encourages individuals to participate more actively in political processes and strengthens democracy (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996).

The research discusses political sensitivity in various ways, such as how individuals are open to political messages and how they process these messages (Zaller, 1992) as a concept shaped by the influence of the media (Gilens, 2001) and from an emotional perspective (Huddy et al., 2007). In this context, political sensitivity emerges as a concept related to knowledge and emotionality. Individuals' political preferences and sensitivities are often shaped by cultural, religious, and economic contexts (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).

Although political literacy and political sensitivity are different concepts, they can function more effectively when developed together. Political literacy provides a factual foundation that can deepen political sensitivity. In this context, individuals are more responsive to political events when they understand the historical roots of contemporary inequalities or the specific mechanisms through which policies affect different communities. In political environments of technical complexity and deep diversity, individuals need both knowledge and sensitivity to understand political issues. Individuals with high levels of political literacy can better recognize the subtleties of political sensitivity. In their research on classroom negotiations, McAvoy and Hess (2013) found that students with more knowledge about controversial issues can better understand and interact with different perspectives.

Education that prioritizes political literacy encourages students to critically analyze political content (Karolčík et al., 2025) and develop the ability to discern biases and misinformation, especially where the media environment is saturated with diverse and contradictory information. Educational institutions, especially at higher levels, are tasked with educating a politically literate citizenry equipped to face contemporary governance challenges (Dudley and Gitelson, 2002). Promoting political literacy in university settings involves not only transferring knowledge but also encouraging critical engagement (Hu and Wang, 2022).

The Department of Political Science and Public Administration includes the curriculum, course and educational contents, and current national and international debates. Within the scope of the curriculum, Political Science and Public Administration students are taught about politics, administration, policy, city, economy, etc. In this context, it is expected that students of the Political Science and Public Administration department will have higher political literacy than other university students. Research also reveals that Political Science and Public Administration education positively influences students' political interest and participation levels (Cansever, 2018; Cansever, 2023).

This study examines the effect of political literacy levels on political science and public administration students' political sensitivity. The political literacy and political sensitivity levels of Political Science and Public Administration students, who are thought to have high levels of political literacy with their education and courses, will be measured. This context will also reveal the relationship between students' political literacy and political sensitivity.

While existing research generally focuses on the impact of political literacy on political participation, this study directly demonstrates its relationship with political sensitivity. Political literacy and sensitivity can function more effectively when developed together. This is because in

political environments characterized by complexity and diversity, individuals need political knowledge and political sensitivity to understand the problems and make the right decisions. While studies on political literacy generally focus on student groups in secondary, high school, and education faculties, this study is distinctive in that it focuses on SBKY students who receive a more detailed education. The results obtained from SBKY students contribute to curriculum studies in other departments.

## 2. Method

The study examines how the political literacy levels of Political Science and Public Administration students affect their political sensitivity. Political literacy was applied to various faculty and department students (Cender, 2023; Karababa and Biricik, 2022; Tarhan, 2015). Although various studies have been conducted on political science and public administration students, there is no existing study on political literacy in which the effect of the education given will be seen. In addition, political sensitivity has an emotional aspect and is related to the level of knowledge. In this context, it is thought that revealing how the political literacy levels of Political Science and Public Administration students, who are expected to take active roles in politics or high public duties in the future, will affect their political sensitivity will have an important place in scaling the department's effectiveness.

The study's problem statement consists of the questions: "Do the political literacy levels of Political Science and Public Administration students affect their political sensitivity?" and "Do the dimensions of political literacy and political sensitivity differ according to various characteristics of Political Science and Public Administration students?".

The study population consists of students in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Süleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. 882 students are studying in the department where the research was conducted. When we look at the distribution of students according to their grade levels, 157 students in the 1st grade, 251 students in the 2nd grade, 207 students in the 3rd grade, and 267 students in the 4th grade. A total of 434 students were reached based on volunteerism through convenience sampling from the specified universe. While collecting the data, a control question was added to both scales to increase data reliability and control, and the answers of the mismarked individuals were not considered. In this context, it was seen that 13 students answered the control question incorrectly and were excluded from the analysis. The questionnaires obtained from the remaining 421 students were evaluated.

Two scales were used as data collection tools in the study. The first is the "Political Literacy Scale" developed by Köksal and Erol (2021), a validity and reliability study conducted with 24 statements. The second one is the "Political Sensitivity Scale," developed by Kirmani et al. (2020) and adapted into Turkish by Ektiren (2024), with validity and reliability studies consisting of 15 statements. The Political Literacy Scale consists of the dimensions: political expertise, knowledge, awareness, interest, and participation. The Political Sensitivity Scale consists of dimensions: economic considerations, religious considerations, social considerations, perceived risk, and perceived political knowledge. Analyses and interpretations were made on these dimensions. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used in the data collection tools, and the respondents' agreement level with the statements was scaled in the score range of 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - slightly agree, 4 - agree, and 5 - strongly agree. Demographic data was also collected from the students. Data was collected through Google Forms. The decision of the Süleyman Demirel University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee approved the research, and the survey application was carried out voluntarily.

The data obtained through the questionnaire forms were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 29.0) program. The 5-point Likert method was used in the

questionnaire, and the scores obtained were analyzed with arithmetic mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage calculations. In addition, statistical evaluations were made over these mean scores. The data were subjected to normality tests, and kurtosis and skewness values of each dimension were calculated. The test values were between -1.825 and +1.964, and the dimensions were normally distributed (Can, 2014). Accordingly, parametric tests were used to compare the dimensions according to demographic variables. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) (F test), which is one of the parametric tests, was used in the comparison of paired groups (t-test) and in the comparison of more than two groups (ANOVA), which is one of the parametric tests (F test). When a difference was found between the groups because of the analysis of variance, the 'Tukey test' was used to determine the source of the difference. Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the problem statement about how much the dimensions of the political literacy scale, which were considered independent variables, affect the dimensions of the political sensitivity scale, which were considered dependent variables, and the enter method was used in variable selection.

## 3. Results

The distribution of the students participating in the study according to demographic variables is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Students Participating in the Study According to Demographic Variables

| Variable | Category | N | % | Variable | Category | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Women | 255 | 60.6 | **Year at Department** | First-year | 103 | 24.5 |
| | Men | 166 | 39.4 | | Second-year | 145 | 34.4 |
| **Age** | 16-19 | 67 | 15.9 | | Third-year | 99 | 23.5 |
| | 20-23 | 315 | 74.8 | | Fourth-year | 74 | 17.6 |
| | 24-27 | 32 | 7.6 | | | | |
| | 28 and above | 7 | 1.7 | **Political Party Membership** | Yes | 21 | 5.0 |
| **Non-Governmental Organization Membership** | Yes | 35 | 8.3 | | No | 400 | 95.0 |
| | No | 386 | 91.7 | | | | |

Approximately 60% of the students participating in the study were female, and 75% were between the ages of 20 and 23. The distribution of participating students according to grades is close to each other. While the students' political party membership is at 5%, the membership of non-governmental organizations is approximately 8%. Membership rates of political parties and non-governmental organizations are low among the students who participated in the study.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Students' Scores on Statements Related to Political Literacy

| Dimension | Item | $\bar{X}$ | ss |
|---|---|---|---|
| Political Expertise | I follow current political events | 3.014 | 1.349 |
| | I know the ideological differences between political parties | 2.945 | 1.293 |
| | I can analyze the effects of political problems on the media | 2.793 | 1.206 |
| | I can analyze the effects of political problems on society | 2.905 | 1.297 |
| | I can analyze the discourses of politicians from a critical point of view. | 2.938 | 1.302 |
| | I can distinguish a political issue from other issues | 2.953 | 1.353 |
| | I can analyze a political event in a process | 2.886 | 1.218 |
| | I approach political news in the media with a critical perspective | 2.967 | 1.355 |
| Political Knowledge | I know that democracy should be a way of life | 3.283 | 1.452 |
| | I know that sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation. | 3.991 | 1.441 |
| | I know political concepts | 2.796 | 1.202 |
| | All members of society must be equal before the law. | 3.734 | 1.496 |
| | I can distinguish democratic societies from other societies | 3.033 | 1.378 |
| Political Awareness | I know what my responsibilities are as a citizen | 3.613 | 1.501 |
| | I am aware of my rights as a citizen | 3.470 | 1.497 |
| | I am aware of the duties and responsibilities of the state towards citizens | 3.584 | 1.488 |
| | I am aware that in democratic societies, there must be freedom of thought | 3.753 | 1.480 |
| | I am aware of the need to be politically literate to cast an informed vote | 3.280 | 1.443 |
| Political Interest | I would like to know how systems of government work | 3.399 | 1.501 |
| | Talking about political issues makes me happy | 2.960 | 1.282 |
| | I would like to contribute to the solution of problems that concern society | 3.359 | 1.466 |
| Political Participation | I would like to contribute to political campaigns | 2.824 | 1.239 |
| | I actively participate in elections | 3.473 | 1.528 |
| | The people should have a say in the governance of the country | 3.922 | 1.454 |

The arithmetic means and standard deviation of the answers given by the students participating in the research to the statements in the Political Literacy questionnaire are shown in Table 2. When the averages of the students are analyzed, it is seen that almost all statements are close to or above three. It is seen that students' political knowledge and political awareness have a value above the average. In addition, political interest and political participation were also above average. It was observed that students gave close to three values to the statements on political expertise. The statement "I can analyze the effects of political problems on the media" with a low mean (2.793) shows that students feel inadequate in reading or analyzing processes related to the media. From this point of view, it is seen that students' level of political knowledge, political awareness, political interest, and political participation is high. In contrast, the level of political expertise is relatively low, slightly below the average. Considering the average of the whole scale, it is possible to say that students' political literacy is high.

The Political Literacy Scale was evaluated using five dimensions in the study, the values of which are shown in Table 3. Cronbach's alpha value was calculated at 0.943 on the scale, which is relatively high.

**Table 3.** Psychometric Properties of Political Literacy Scale Dimensions

| Dimension | Number of Items | Min-Max | Cronbach Alfa | $\bar{X}$ | ss | Normality Test | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Kurtosis | Skewness |
| Political Expertise | 8 | 1-5 | 0.901 | 2.925 | 7.975 | -0.248 | 0.809 |
| Political Knowledge | 5 | 1-5 | 0.795 | 3.367 | 5.182 | -0.849 | -0.159 |
| Political Awareness | 5 | 1-5 | 0.893 | 3.540 | 6.197 | -1.384 | -0.216 |
| Political Interest | 3 | 1-5 | 0.762 | 3.239 | 3.507 | -1.172 | 0.178 |
| Political Participation | 3 | 1-5 | 0.782 | 3.406 | 3.314 | -0.967 | -0.222 |

*The Political expertise* dimension consists of eight statements that express individuals' political analysis and discrimination skills. The Political Expertise dimension's arithmetic means and standard deviation was calculated as 2.925 and 7.975, respectively. Cronbach Alpha value expressing the reliability of the dimension was found to be 0.901. *The Political knowledge* dimension consists of five statements measuring individuals' political knowledge level. The arithmetic mean of the Political Knowledge dimension was 3.367, and the standard deviation was 5.187. The Cronbach Alpha value, which expresses the reliability of the dimension, was calculated as 0.795 and was found to be reliable.

*The political awareness* dimension, again, consists of five statements, including statements about the awareness levels of individuals in the political environment. The arithmetic mean of the political awareness dimension was found to be 3.540, and the standard deviation was found to be 6.197. The Cronbach Alpha value, which expresses the degree of reliability of the dimension, was calculated as 0.893 and was found to be reliable. *The Political interest* dimension consists of three statements, including statements about individuals' level of interest in political issues. The political interest dimensions of arithmetic mean and standard deviation were 3.239 and 3.507, respectively. The Cronbach Alpha value, which expresses the degree of reliability of the dimension, was calculated as 0.762 and was found to be reliable. Finally, *the political participation* dimension consists of three statements, which include statements aiming to measure individuals' participation levels in political processes. The arithmetic mean of the political participation dimension was 3.406, and the standard deviation was 3.314. The Cronbach Alpha value, which expresses the degree of reliability of the dimension, was calculated as 0.782 and was found to be reliable. Table 4 shows the arithmetic means and standard deviation of the answers given by the students participating in the research to the statements in the Political Sensitivity questionnaire.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Students' Scores on Statements Related to Political Sensitivity

| Dimension | Item | $\bar{X}$ | SS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Religious Considerations | I think the candidate from my religion can understand my problems better. | 2.344 | 1.006 |
| | I prefer to vote for the candidate of my religion. | 2.316 | 1.061 |
| | I prefer to vote for the political party that best suits my religion. | 2.159 | 0.969 |
| | I prefer to vote for the candidate I think best fits my religion. | 2.145 | 0.959 |
| Economic Considerations | The weakening of the Turkish lira against the dollar is a worrying trend. | 3.898 | 1.461 |
| | Rising unemployment is not good news for the Turkish economy. | 4.021 | 1.442 |
| Perceived Risk | If the wrong candidate is chosen, our country will lose a lot. | 3.919 | 1.454 |
| | If the wrong party is elected, our country will lose a lot. | 3.848 | 1.474 |
| Perceived Political Knowledge | I consider myself an expert on politics. | 2.309 | 0.959 |
| | Compared to most people, I know more about politics than they do. | 2.715 | 1.134 |
| | I know a lot about politics. | 2.625 | 0.996 |
| | I spend a lot of time talking about politics. | 2.413 | 1.106 |
| Social Considerations | I prefer to vote for a candidate who I think will work to improve the conditions of women. | 3.363 | 1.457 |
| | I prefer to vote for a political party that I think will work to improve conditions for farmers. | 3.401 | 1.453 |
| | I prefer to vote for a candidate who I think will work to improve the conditions of the non-privileged segments of Turkish society. | 3.385 | 1.488 |

When Table 4 is analyzed, it is seen that political sensitivity varies in various considerations. While the averages of the statements on religious considerations are close to two, the averages on economic considerations and perceived risk dimensions are close to four. It was observed that the lowest averages in the statements on the political sensitivity scale were found in the statements on the dimension of religious considerations. The mean value of the students' statements on social considerations is close to 3.5. It was observed that the average level of statements in the perceived political knowledge dimension of the students was close to 2.5.

In the study, the Political Sensitivity Scale was evaluated within the framework of five dimensions, and the values of each dimension are shown in Table 5. Cronbach's alpha value of the entire scale was calculated as 0.813, which was relatively high. Therefore, students' sensitivity toward economic considerations, perceived risk, and social considerations is high. The perceived political knowledge dimension was relatively low, with a value close to the average. Sensitivity to religious considerations was found to be low. When the scale is evaluated in general, it is possible to say that students have a high level of political sensitivity.

**Table 5.** Psychometric Properties of Political Sensitivity Scale Dimensions

| Dimension | Number of Items | Min-Max | Cronbach Alfa | $\bar{X}$ | ss | Normality Test | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Kurtosis | Skewness |
| Religious Considerations | 4 | 1-5 | 0.879 | 2.241 | 3.425 | 1.867 | 0.989 |
| Economic Considerations | 2 | 1-5 | 0.857 | 3.960 | 2.716 | -1.111 | -0.752 |
| Perceived Risk | 2 | 1-5 | 0.905 | 3.884 | 2.798 | -1.217 | -0.663 |
| Perceived Political Knowledge | 4 | 1-5 | 0.764 | 2.515 | 3.216 | 1.907 | 1.117 |
| Social Considerations | 3 | 1-5 | 0.835 | 3.383 | 3.813 | -1.478 | 0.057 |

When the sub-dimensions of the Political Sensitivity scale are analyzed separately, it is first seen that the *Religious Considerations* dimension consists of four statements and includes statements about the religious sensitivities of individuals in political environments. The arithmetic means of the religious considerations dimension was 2.241, and the standard deviation was 3.425. The Cronbach Alpha value expressing the reliability of the dimension was calculated as 0.879 and found to be reliable. The second dimension, *Economic Considerations*, consists of two statements. The arithmetic mean of the economic considerations dimension was 3.960, and the standard deviation was 2.716. The Cronbach Alpha value expressing the dimension's reliability was calculated as 0.857 and found reliable.

The third dimension of the scale, the *Perceived Risk* dimension, also consists of two statements, which consist of items related to individuals' risk perceptions towards the candidate or party to be elected. The arithmetic mean of the perceived risk dimension was 3.884, and the standard deviation was 2.798. The Cronbach Alpha value expressing the reliability of the dimension was calculated as 0.905 and found to be reliable. *The Perceived Political Knowledge* dimension consists of four statements. The dimension consists of statements measuring an individual's perceived political knowledge level. The arithmetic mean of the perceived political knowledge dimension was calculated as 2.515, and the standard deviation as 3.216. The Cronbach Alpha value expressing the reliability of the dimension was calculated as 0.835 and found to be reliable. Finally, the *Social Considerations* dimension consists of three statements that measure individuals' sensitivity to social issues. The social considerations dimension's arithmetic mean and standard deviation were 3.383 and 3.813, respectively. The Cronbach Alpha value expressing the reliability of the dimension was calculated as 0.835 and found to be reliable.

The dimensions' scores in both scales were compared according to demographic variables. The t-test was used to compare paired groups, and ANOVA (F test) was used to compare three or more groups. Firstly, when the relationships between the sub-dimensions of the political literacy scale and demographic variables were examined, it was found that there was a significant difference between the political expertise dimension and gender ($t=2.561$, $p=0.005$), political party membership ($t=2.303$, $p=0.029$), and non-governmental organization membership ($t=2.890$, $p=0.006$). It was observed that

the mean political expertise scores of males, political party members, and members of non-governmental organizations were higher. There was no significant difference between the political expertise dimension and students' age and grade level variables ($p>0.05$). There was no significant relationship between the dimensions of political knowledge, political awareness, political interest, and political participation and the students' demographic variables ($p>0.05$). There was no significant difference between the gender and grade levels of the students and their political literacy levels ($p>0.05$).

When the relationships between the sub-dimensions in the political sensitivity scale, which is the other scale of the study, and demographic variables are examined, it was found that there was a significant difference between the dimension of religious considerations and the age variable of the participants ($F=6.001$, $p<0.001$). In further analysis, it was seen that the difference was between the 24-27 age group and the 16-19 and 20-23 age groups and that the average value given by the participants in the 24-27 age group to the statements regarding religious issues was higher. Similarly, it was found that there was a significant difference between the religious considerations dimension and students' grades ($F=5.372$, $p<0.001$). Further analysis showed the difference between first-year and third-year students and first-year and fourth-year students. Here, it was observed that the averages of first-year students regarding religious issues were lower than the other groups. In addition, it was observed that the averages of the statements regarding religious considerations decreased at each level from the fourth grade to the first grade. No significant difference was found between the dimension of religious considerations and the variables of gender, political party membership, and non-governmental organization membership ($p>0.05$).

A significant difference was found between the perceived risk dimension and gender ($t=1.985$, $p=0.048$). It was observed that the mean perceived risk of women was higher. No significant difference was found between the perceived risk dimension and the variables of age, class, political party membership, and non-governmental organization membership ($p>0.05$). It was found that there was a significant difference between the perceived political knowledge dimension and the variables of gender ($t=-4.213$, $p<0.001$), political party membership ($t=2.618$, $p=0.016$), and civil society organization membership ($t=2.085$, $p=0.038$). It was observed that the perceived political knowledge of males, students with political party membership, and non-governmental organization membership was higher. No significant difference was found between the perceived political knowledge dimension and the age and grade variables of the participants ($p>0.05$).

It was found that there was a significant difference between the gender ($t=3.508$, $p<0.001$) variable of the social considerations dimension. It was observed that women had higher averages in the statements related to social considerations. No significant difference was found between the social considerations dimension and the participants' political party membership, non-governmental organization membership, age, and class variables ($p>0.05$). No significant relationship was found between the economic considerations dimension and the students' demographic variables ($p>0.05$). Table 6 shows the regression analysis results of the effect of political literacy dimensions on the "religious considerations" dimension of political sensitivity.

**Table 6.** Analysis of the Effect of Political Literacy Dimensions on Religious Considerations

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | R | $R^2$ | F | P | β | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Expertise | Religious Considerations | 0.136 | 0.018 | 1.563 | 0.169 | 0.096 | 1.966 | 0.059 |
| Political Knowledge | | | | | | 0.024 | 0.485 | 0.628 |
| Political Awareness | | | | | | 0.074 | 1.509 | 0.132 |
| Political Interest | | | | | | 0.078 | 1.631 | 0.104 |
| Political Participation | | | | | | 0.077 | 1.586 | 0.113 |

When the regression results in Table 6 are analyzed, the independent variables explain 18% ($R^2$=0.018) of the change in the religious considerations variable. Moreover, the explanatory power of the model was not significant in terms of significance (F=1.563, p=0.169). Among the independent variables, political expertise (β=0.096, t=1.966, p=0.059), political knowledge (β=0.024, t=0.485, p=0.628), political awareness (β=0.074, t=1.509, p=0.132), political interest (β=0.078, t=1. 631, p=0.104), and political participation (β=0.077, t=1.586, p=0.113) had a positive effect on the religious considerations dimension, but it was not statistically significant. Table 7 shows the regression analysis results of the effect of political literacy dimensions on the "economic considerations" dimension of political sensitivity.

**Table 7.** Analyzing the Impact of Political Literacy Dimensions on Economic Considerations

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | R | $R^2$ | F | P | β | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Expertise | Economic Considerations | 0.567 | 0.321 | 39.311 | <0.001 | 0.333 | 7.235 | <0.001 |
| Political Knowledge | | | | | | 0.496 | 11.692 | <0.001 |
| Political Awareness | | | | | | 0.512 | 12.191 | <0.001 |
| Political Interest | | | | | | 0.418 | 9.408 | <0.001 |
| Political Participation | | | | | | 0.475 | 11.051 | <0.001 |

As a result of the regression analysis in Table 7, the independent variables explain 32.1% ($R^2$=0.321) of the change in the economic considerations variable. In addition, there was no problem regarding the significance of the model's explanatory power (F=39.311, p<0.001). As a result of the regression analysis, the independent variables political expertise (β=0.333, t=7.235, p<0.001), political knowledge (β=0.496, t=11.692, p<0.001), political awareness (β=0.512, t=12.191, p<0.001), political interest (β=0.418, t=9. 408, p<0.001), and political participation (β=0.475, t=11.051, p<0.001) have a positive and moderate effect on the economic considerations dimension and all dimensions are statistically significant. From this point of view, it is seen that students' political literacy levels have a positive effect on their sensitivity towards economic considerations. Table 8 shows the regression analysis results of the effect of political literacy dimensions on the "perceived risk" dimension of political sensitivity.

**Table 8.** Analysis of the Effect of Political Literacy Dimensions on Perceived Risk

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | R | $R^2$ | F | P | β | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Expertise | Perceived Risk | 0.575 | 0.331 | 41.062 | <0.001 | 0.403 | 9.001 | <0.001 |
| Political Knowledge | | | | | | 0.501 | 11.863 | <0.001 |
| Political Awareness | | | | | | 0.504 | 11.939 | <0.001 |
| Political Interest | | | | | | 0.410 | 9.214 | <0.001 |
| Political Participation | | | | | | 0.500 | 11.831 | <0.001 |

As a result of the regression analysis in Table 8, the independent variables explain 33.1% ($R^2$=0.331) of the change in the perceived risk variable. In addition, there was no problem regarding the significance of the model's explanatory power (F=41.062, p<0.001). Y As a result of the regression analysis, the independent variables political expertise (β=0.403, t=9.001, p<0.001),

political knowledge (β=0.501, t=11.863, p<0.001), political awareness (β=0.504, t=11.939, p<0.001), political interest (β=0.410, t=9.214, p<0.001), and political participation (β=0.500, t=11.831, p<0.001) have a positive and moderate effect on the perceived risk dimension and all dimensions are statistically significant. Thus, it is seen that students' political literacy levels positively affect their risk sensitivity towards the consequences of choosing the wrong candidate or party. Table 9 shows the regression analysis results of the effect of political literacy dimensions on the "perceived political knowledge" dimension of political sensitivity.

**Table 9.** Analysis of the Effect of Political Literacy Dimensions on Perceived Political Knowledge

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | R | $R^2$ | F | P | β | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Expertise | Perceived Political Knowledge | 0.449 | 0.202 | 20.976 | <0.001 | 0.422 | 9.541 | <0.001 |
| Political Knowledge | | | | | | 0.268 | 5.689 | <0.001 |
| Political Awareness | | | | | | 0.231 | 4.865 | <0.001 |
| Political Interest | | | | | | 0.330 | 7.151 | <0.001 |
| Political Participation | | | | | | 0.280 | 5.975 | <0.001 |

As a result of the regression analysis in Table 9, the independent variables explain 20.2% ($R^2$=0.202) of the change in the perceived political knowledge dimension. In addition, there was no problem regarding the significance of the model's explanatory power (F=20.976, p<0.001). As a result of the regression analysis, the independent variables political expertise (β=0.422, t=9.541, p<0.001), political knowledge (β=0.268, t=5.689, p<0.001), political awareness (β=0.231, t=4.865, p<0.001), political interest (β=0.330, t=7. 151, p<0.001), and political participation (β=0.280, t=5.975, p<0.001) have a positive and moderate effect on the perceived political knowledge dimension and all dimensions are statistically significant. From this point of view, students' political literacy levels positively affect their sensitivity to political knowledge. The fact that the increase in the student's knowledge level directly correlates with the perceived political knowledge dimension shows the compatibility of the data collected in the research. Table 10 shows the regression analysis results of the effect of political literacy dimensions on the "social considerations" dimension of political sensitivity.

**Table 10.** Analyzing the Impact of Political Literacy Dimensions on Social Considerations

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | R | $R^2$ | F | P | β | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Expertise | Social Considerations | 0.520 | 0.271 | 30.823 | <0.001 | 0.345 | 7.521 | <0.001 |
| Political Knowledge | | | | | | 0.482 | 11.267 | <0.001 |
| Political Awareness | | | | | | 0.447 | 10.243 | <0.001 |
| Political Interest | | | | | | 0.350 | 7.654 | <0.001 |
| Political Participation | | | | | | 0.430 | 9.752 | <0.001 |

As a result of the regression analysis in Table 10, the independent variables explain 27.1% ($R^2$=0.271) of the change in the social considerations dimension. In addition, there was no problem regarding the significance of the model's explanatory power (F=30.823, p<0.001). As a result of the regression analysis, the independent variables political expertise (β=0.345, t=7.521, p<0.001),

political knowledge (β=0.482, t=11.267, p<0.001), political awareness (β=0.447, t=10.243, p<0.001), political interest (β=0.350, t=7. 654, p<0.001), and political participation (β=0.430, t=9.752, p<0.001) had a positive and moderate effect on the social considerations dimension and all dimensions were statistically significant. Thus, students' political literacy levels positively affect their sensitivity to social considerations. Table 11 shows the regression analysis results of the effect of political literacy on political sensitivity.

**Table 11.** Analyzing the Effect of Political Literacy on Political Sensitivity

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | R | $R^2$ | F | P | β | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Literacy | Political Sensitivity | 0.642 | 0.413 | 294.549 | <0.001 | 0.642 | 17.162 | <0.001 |

As a result of the regression analysis in Table 11, 41.3% ($R^2$=0.413) of the change in political sensitivity is explained by political literacy. In addition, there was no problem regarding the significance of the model's explanatory power (F=294.549, p<0.001). As a result of the regression analysis showed that the independent variable, political literacy (β=0.642, t=17.162, p<0.001), had a positive and substantial effect on political sensitivity and was statistically significant. In other words, as students' political literacy levels increase, their political sensitivity also increases.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

In democratic and modernized societies, there is an unquestionable general belief that citizen interest and participation in political processes are essential (Almond and Verba, 1963; Huntington, 1973; Inkeles, 1969; Lipset, 1960). The most important means of increasing political interest and participation is to increase political literacy in society and to create an environment of conscious political sensitivity. The most fundamental step in increasing political literacy and creating an environment of conscious political sensitivity is educational institutions. Research on this subject in higher education generally focuses on the education faculty. This study, on the other hand, considering the course contents, is focused on the students of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration with the assumption that the political literacy of the students of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration is high. The study examined the effect of Political Science and Public Administration students' political literacy levels on their political sensitivity. Political Science and Public Administration departments contribute positively to political literacy through curricula and practices. In this context, the political literacy and political sensitivity levels of SPSS students were measured. In addition, the relationship between students' political literacy and political sensitivity was also revealed.

The study found that the participants had high political literacy and sensitivity levels. Research emphasizes the critical role that political literacy education plays in developing citizens' political awareness (Campbell, 2019; Dağ, 2012; Dudley and Gitelson, 2002). One study emphasizes that improving political literacy, especially among young people, can significantly shape their political sensitivity (Pattie and Johnston, 2003). Students' sensitivity to religious considerations, one of the sub-dimensions of political sensitivity, was low. Differences were found between the sub-dimensions of the political literacy scale and demographic variables, and the mean political expertise of males, political party memberships, and non-governmental organization memberships was higher. Many studies have shown that male participants have higher levels of political literacy than female participants (Cender, 2023; Karababa and Biricik, 2022; Tarhan, 2015). In this study, there was no significant difference between the gender of the students and their political literacy levels (p>0.05). In some similar studies, no significant difference was observed between political literacy levels according to gender (Çalışkan et al., 2023; Faiz, 2016).

Differences were found between the sub-dimensions of the political sensitivity scale and demographic variables. There was a significant difference between the dimension of religious considerations and the participants' age variables. In addition, the average value given by the participants in the 24-27 age group to the statements regarding religious considerations was higher than that of the lower age groups. Similarly, it was found that there was a significant difference between the dimension of religious considerations and the grades of the students, and it was observed that the averages of the statements regarding religious considerations decreased at every level from the fourth grade to the first grade. This situation reveals that the sensitivity of students on religious considerations is decreasing with each passing year and shows that religious issues are not a priority in voting behavior. In the research conducted by Temizel (2012), it was observed that voters do not care about the candidate's religious sensitivity and make more economic rational choices. The findings of Aktaş's (2021) research on young people are similar. It was observed that young people behave liberally when making political choices and that their choice behavior is compatible with the principles of rational choice theory.

It was found that there was a significant difference between the perceived risk dimension and the gender variable, and women's perceived risk averages were higher. The perceived risk factor is critical in understanding political preferences' psychological and emotional basis. The perception that the country has much to lose if the wrong party or candidate is elected shows that the participants will be careful in voting.

It was found that there was a significant difference between the perceived political knowledge dimension and demographic variables. Males, students with political party membership, and civil society organization members perceived political knowledge as higher. This result was the same as that of the political expertise and political knowledge sub-dimensions of the political literacy scale. In this context, political party membership and membership in civil society organizations may contribute to individuals' political knowledge and expertise or change their perceptions in this direction. In addition, the fact that men stand out in terms of political knowledge and expertise is consistent with the male-dominated political environment in Turkey. There was a significant difference between the gender variables of the social considerations dimension, and women had higher averages in the statements related to social issues. Research shows that individuals sensitive to social justice tend to support more egalitarian policies in their political preferences (Jost and Kay, 2005). In this context, it may be necessary for women, who are more inclined to social considerations, to be more present in political environments with their political knowledge and sensitivity to put forward egalitarian policies.

As a result of the regression analyses, it was concluded that the dimensions of political literacy positively affect the dimensions of political sensitivity. Political expertise, political knowledge, political awareness, political awareness, political interest, and political participation, which are the dimensions of political literacy, have a positive and significant effect on economic considerations, social considerations, perceived risk, and perceived political knowledge, which are the dimensions of political sensitivity. It has been revealed that the dimensions of political literacy do not affect only the dimension of religious considerations. Finally, it was observed that as the level of political literacy increases, the level of political sensitivity also increases.

As a result, the political literacy and sensitivity levels of Political Science and Public Administration students were found to be high, and political sensitivity increased as political literacy increased. The study's data showed that the number of Political Science and Public Administration students and members of political parties and non-governmental organizations is low. In this context, initiatives that will allow students to be in active political environments are thought to be essential for seeing the results of their already high political literacy and sensitivity.

The literature focuses on political literacy, which is intended to increase citizens' knowledge and awareness and critically interpret political issues and contexts. This research has mainly focused

on the impact of increased political literacy on students taking courses such as politics, policy, and economics and their political sensitivity. In this context, including courses and/or practices that can support the political literacy of novice voters, especially in higher education institutions, will contribute significantly to future political participation and informed voting behavior as a civic duty. Political literacy and political sensitivity research on citizens or university students from other departments will deepen the discussion and allow for new comparisons.

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