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Editors Prof. Dr. Erdem Seçilmiş Dr. Necmi Ocak







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Editors: Prof. Dr. Erdem Seçilmiş, Dr. Necmi Ocak

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Searching the Level of State Budget Awareness and Consciousness of Generation Z University Students******

Gonca Güngör Göksu¹ - Durdane Küçükaycan² - Cihan Yüksel³ - Erdal Eroğlu⁴ - Gülşah Evcim⁵ - Hilal Altay⁶ - Uğur Coşkun⁷ - Eda Demircan⁸

Sakarya University¹ E-mail: ggungor@sakarya.edu.tr

Eskisehir Osmangazi University² E-mail: durdane@ogu.edu.tr

Mersin University³ E-mail: cihanyuksel@mersin.edu.tr

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University⁴ E-mail: erdaleroglu@comu.edu.tr

Sakarya University⁵ E-mail: gulsah.evcim1@ogr.sakarya.edu.tr

Eskisehir Osmangazi University⁶ E-mail: 513020210022@ogrenci.ogu.edu.tr

Mersin University⁷ E-mail: ugurrrcoskun@gmail.com

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University⁸ E-mail: demircaneda293@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to determine the level of state budget awareness and measure the budget awareness scores of undergraduate students between the ages of 18-25 enrolled in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (ÇOMU), Eskişehir Osmangazi University (ESOGU), Mersin University (MEU) and Sakarya University (SAU). To achieve the study's aim, Basic Budget Awareness seminars were conducted for 4170 students enrolled in 44 different educational units of four universities between December 2023 and May 2024. A total of 3972 participants responsed the first dimension of the scale titled "Citizens' Budget Awareness and Influential Factors" developed by Güngör Göksu (2020) and had its validity and reliability proven statistically. Its originality lies in measuring the knowledge levels of students enrolled in different educational units at four universities and observing their attitudes towards the state budget within the scope of Basic Budget Awareness Seminars. The cumulative budget awareness score of all the participants from the four universities was calculated as 2.90. Additionally, the budget awareness level of those who have never taken a public finance course was measured as 2.78 (3.313), and 3.34 (659) for those who have taken it at least once in their education life.

Keywords: Budget Awareness, Generation Z, Undergraduate Students

JEL Codes: H60, H61, I22

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INTRODUCTION

In order to realise the importance of accountability, participation, fiscal democracy, transparency, tax awareness and anti-corruption in the public sector, citizens need to be more informed and aware of the state budget. Effective management of public resources is only possible with a budget-literate and conscious society that recognises the power of the purse. For this reason, it is essential that university students, who will assume influential roles in increasing social benefit by participating in decision-making and policy-making processes in the future, have high levels of budget awareness. Generation Z, which includes university students, constitutes 12% of the population according to TÜİK data (TurkStat, 2023) and 16% of the voters registered in the domestic and foreign voter registers (SBE, 2023). The participation of university students, who are voters in terms of the principal-agent relationship in representative democracies, in budgeting processes is increasing daily. The research is necessary because it focuses on increasing the knowledge and awareness of university students on state budget issues.

There is a need to improve citizens' knowledge about the state budget and to make them aware of their power of the purse. Thus, activities with high social benefits, such as strengthening accountability, transparency and fiscal democracy in public financial management, ensuring participation, increasing tax awareness and preventing corruption, can be strengthened. Based on this main idea, this study aims to determine the level of state budget awareness and measure the budget awareness scores of undergraduate students between the ages of 18-25 enrolled in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (ÇOMU), Eskişehir Osmangazi University (ESOGU), Mersin University (MEU) and Sakarya University (SAU).

LITERATURE

In the literature, many studies have been conducted on budget awareness, perception of the power of the purse, and fiscal and budget literacy levels (Yıldız & Alkan, 2017; Teyyare et al., 2018; Kayalıdere & Çakır, 2018; Kılavuz & Yüksel, 2019; Dilek & Zorkun, 2020; Güngör Göksu, 2020; Sapankaya & Tandırcıoğlu, 2022; Layık et al., 2022; Ciğerci & Pehlivan, 2022; Eroğlu & Kaynar, 2023). These studies analysed the budget knowledge levels, perceptions of the power of the purse, and economic and fiscal literacy of participants in different samples, such as university students, citizens and municipal council members. In studies focusing specifically on university students, the views of students enrolled in the faculty of economics and administrative sciences or the faculty of political sciences of a single university were analysed. However, the originality of this study is that the knowledge levels of students enrolled in different educational units at four different universities were measured, and their attitudes towards the state budget were observed within the scope of Basic Budget Awareness Seminars.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objective of the study, between December 2023 and May 2024, Basic Budget Awareness seminars were conducted for 4170 students enrolled in 44 different educational units of the four universities, and 3972 participants were administered the first dimension of the scale titled Citizens' Budget Awareness and Influential Factors (CBAIF), which was developed by Güngör Göksu (2020) and whose validity and reliability were proven before the seminars. The budget consciousness score of the participants was measured over 12 items on the scale. In addition, a 13th item was added to the scale to directly ask whether the respondents were aware of the state budget. In this way, the budget awareness score measured using the first 12 items was compared with the responses to the 13th item and cross-checked. The hypothesis of the study was established as follows:

Ho: The budget awareness level of undergraduate students enrolled in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Mersin University and Sakarya University is sufficient.

H1: The budget awareness level of undergraduate students enrolled in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Mersin University and Sakarya University is not sufficient.

The target group to be included in the sample was determined by a non-probability-based sampling method. The reason for accepting this type of sampling in the research is that seminars are conducted in educational units with the highest number of students to provide seminars to the highest number of students possible. The convenience sampling method was preferred as a sub-sampling method.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 3972 students participating in the study, 27.1% were enrolled in SAU, 26% in MEU, 24% in ESOGU and 22.3% in ÇOMU. When the distribution among the classes is analysed, 38% of the students were enrolled in the first, 27% in the second, 20.5% in the third, 11.8% in the fourth year and 2.3% stated that they had extended their regular education period. 63% of the participants were female and 37% were male. A total of 983 participants were enrolled in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences or the Faculty of Political Sciences, and 2989 were enrolled in educational units other than these two faculties. Table 1 shows the demografic information of participations.

Table 1. Demographic information

Table 1. Demographic information							
	Participant Numbers	Percentage	Median	Mod	Std. Deviation		
University							
ÇOMU (47.880)	886	22.3					
ESOGU (30.100)	953	24.0		4			
MEU (40.909)	1057	26.6	3.00		1.100		
SAU (53.299)	1076	27.1					
Degree							
1. Year	1515	38.1					
2. Year	1064	26.8					
3. Year	810	20.4	2.00	1	1.120		
4. Year	467	11.8	2.00	1	1.120		
More Than 4 Year	91	2.3					
Missing Data	25	0.6					
Gender							
Female	2455	61.8					
Male	1463	36.8	1.00	1	40.4		
Missing Data	54	1.4	1.00	1	.484		
<u>Total</u>	3972	100					

Source: Own Elaboration Using the SPSS Outputs.

The responses of the participants and their frequency are explained in Table 2. The Cronbach's Alpha (α) value of the 13 items in the scale is 0.91, indicating high validity and reliability in terms of internal consistency. Table 2 shows that most undergraduate students lacked knowledge and awareness and did not agree with the survey statements, except for the 10^{th} and 11^{th} items. Most positive responses were related to understanding the link between the taxes paid and the public services received and questioning the use of public revenues. Similarly, most participants disagreed on the 13th item, which stated that the students were well-informed about the state budget. Key findings have been detected from the table:

 A moderate level of familiarity exists regarding the Citizen's Budget Guide and the Final Account Report, but only a tiny percentage strongly agree with being well-informed.

- ii. Higher neutrality and disagreement indicate that knowledge about the state budget and public revenue types is limited.
- iii. Interest in state budget issues is relatively low, with higher levels of disagreement and neutrality.
- iv. Information about the linkage between taxes paid and public services, as well as rights about budgetary information, is more agreed upon, though still not overwhelmingly.
- The statement about being well-informed on the state budget sees a relatively balanced view across disagree, neutral and agree, suggesting varied perceptions of personal knowledge levels.

Overall, the survey revealed a general trend of moderate knowledge and engagement with budget-related information, with areas of significant neutrality suggesting potential gaps in public understanding or communication from relevant authorities.

Table 2. Frequency of responses

	Cronbach's Alpha (including all items) = .91	Never Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Fotally Agree
		ž				Ĭ
1	I am familiar with the Citizen's Budget Guide and the Citizen's Final Account Report.	26.3	33.8	26.0	10.6	3.3
2	I think I have sufficient knowledge about the state budget.	15.1	30.7	32.3	17.8	4.1
3	I am interested in state budget issues.	14.7	21.6	26.0	27.7	10.0
4	I have knowledge about the share of public revenue types in the state budget.	19.3	34.7	27.3	15.3	3.4
5	I have knowledge about the share of public expenditure types in the state budget.	19.5	33.7	27.2	16.3	3.3
6	I have information about the public expenditures to which the revenues collected by the state from citizens are allocated.	16.3	27.6	27.7	23.3	5.1
7	I have knowledge about the budget process and budget-related transactions.	17.7	31.5	29.7	17.4	3.7
8	I am aware of an official website where I can get information about the state budget and current figures.	22.5	30.0	18.4	21.2	7.9
9	I have knowledge about the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018.	35.4	36.9	16.2	7.7	3.8
10	I have knowledge about the link between the taxes I pay and the public services I benefit.	12.7	18.8	26.4	32.7	9.5
11	I have information about my budgetary rights as set out in the Constitution.	20.3	32.5	27.4	15.1	4.8
12	I question the services for which public revenues are spent.	9.9	12.9	30.1	34.8	21.2
13	I think I am well informed about the state budget.	14.8	24.3	35.1	18.7	7.1

Source: Own Elaboration Using the SPSS Outputs.

Another table crated in the study is Table 3 that informs about the mean values for each items in the survey. Accordingly, except for 10th and 12th items like Table 2, the mean values were detected lower than median score (3.00). The cumulative budget awareness score of the participants from the

four universities is 2.90. In addition, students were asked whether they had taken a Public Finance course during their education. The budget awareness level of those who have never taken the public finance course was measured as 2.78 (3.313) and 3.34 (659) for those who have taken it at least once. Finally, when it was analysed whether the participants were conscious of the state budget, it was found that 39.3% were not conscious, 34.8% were undecided, and only 25.9% were conscious. It was determined that a significant portion of the participants who stated that they were conscious were students who took the Public Finance course in their undergraduate education.

The table presented the mean values derived from pre-test items assessing individuals' cognizance, perceptions, and engagement concerning fiscal governance matters. The scoring mechanism utilized suggested a spectrum, with higher values denoting more pronounced agreement or enhanced self-assessment. The insights drawn from each item are as follows:

- i. Familiarity with the Citizen's Budget Guide and the Citizen's Final Account Report: Exhibits a moderately low level of awareness, with an average rating of 2.31.
- ii. Proficiency concerning state budget knowledge: Demonstrates moderate acumen, evidenced by an average score of 2.65.
- iii. Engagement with state budget issues: Moderate interest is apparent, skewing slightly positive with a mean value of 2.98.
- iv. Understanding of public revenue types within the state budget: Displays moderate knowledge, with a mean score of 2.50.
- v. Comprehension of public expenditure types within the state budget: Corresponds to the understanding of revenue types, also averaging 2.50.
- vi. Information on the allocation of public expenditures: Slightly more informed responses noted here, with an average of 2.74.
- vii. Insight into the budget process and related transactions: Moderate knowledge is observed, with a mean of 2.58.
- viii. Awareness of official resources for state budget information: Moderate awareness is indicated, with an average score of 2.62.
- ix. Knowledge of Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018: This item records the lowest level of awareness among respondents, with a mean of 2.08.
- x. Insight into the correlation between taxes paid and public services received: Shows a higher understanding, with a mean rating of 3.07.
- Awareness of constitutional budgetary rights: Moderate awareness noted, with a mean score of 2.51.
- xii. Critical perspective on public revenue expenditure: Exhibits the highest level of engagement, with an average of 3.45.
- xiii. Self-perception of being well-informed about the state budget: Moderately positive assessment with a mean of 2.79.

Table 3. Mean values of pre-test items

	Item	Mean
1	I am aware of the Citizen's Budget Guide and the Citizen's Final Account Report.	2.31
2	I think I have sufficient knowledge about the state budget.	2.65
3	I am interested in state budget issues.	2.98
4	I have knowledge about the share of public revenue types in the state budget.	2.50
5	I have knowledge about the share of public expenditure types in the state budget.	2.50
6	I have information about the public expenditures to which the revenues collected by the state from citizens are allocated.	2.74
7	I have knowledge about the budget process and budget-related transactions.	2.58
8	I am aware of an official website where I can get information about the state budget and current figures.	2.62
9	I have knowledge about the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018 .	2.08
10	I have knowledge about the link between the taxes I pay and the public services I benefit.	3.07
11	I have information about my budgetary rights as set out in the Constitution.	2.51
12	I question the services for which public revenues are spent.	3.45
13	I think I am well informed about the state budget.	2.79

Source: Own Elaboration Using the SPSS Outputs.

These findings reflected a spectrum of engagement and knowledge concerning state budget matters, with particular strengths in scrutinizing the expenditure of public revenues and understanding the connection between tax contributions and public services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

According to the results, the budget awareness levels of students enrolled in undergraduate programmes at four universities were found to need to be increased. The budget awareness level of the students who have taken the Public Finance course at least once was 21 per cent higher than those who have never taken this course. Within the scope of the study, 3972 students were directly contacted in seminars conducted simultaneously in four different universities, and their level of knowledge about the state budget and their attitudes towards the state budget were observed. It was observed that students outside the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and the Faculty of Political Sciences showed positive changes in their interests and attitudes after the seminars. The statistical analyses and the findings obtained as a result of the observations showed that a course to increase budget knowledge, even at a basic level, should be included in the curriculum of all faculties. An important aim of higher education is to raise individuals who are aware of their social responsibilities. A society with high budget knowledge and awareness makes the budgeting process more transparent, accountable, participatory and effective. These findings highlight the need for Generation Z undergraduate students to improve their budget awareness, as they will hold decision-making positions in public and private sectors and be direct taxpayers.

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