

## Preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History

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### Abstract

*The current study presents the results of a research conducted at the University of Patras to measure 120 university students' of Letters and Philosophy attitudes towards teaching History. Additionally, it proposes a valid and reliable instrument for the measurement of preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History in secondary education. The development of the instrument is expected to fulfill the need to measure History teachers' attitudes about four dimensions: anxiety, perceived benefits, self-efficacy and perceived difficulties, which were found to affect teachers' attitudes towards History teaching, according to the review of the literature. The exploratory factor analysis indicated satisfactory construct validity and reliability of the instrument. The data analysis showed that preservice teachers demonstrate medium levels of anxiety and self-efficacy. Furthermore, they acknowledge the benefits of History teaching to students' intellectual development and social prosperity, even though they perceive History as a demanding subject in the school curriculum. The research results suggest further research on the field and advocate preservice History teachers' support with academic courses focused on teaching methodology and effective strategies in History, internship programs, and counseling during their university education.*

**Keywords:** History, attitudes, teaching, preservice teachers, secondary education

### Περίληψη

*Η παρούσα μελέτη παρουσιάζει τα αποτελέσματα μια έρευνας που διεξήχθη στο Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών, με σκοπό τη μέτρηση των στάσεων 120 φοιτητών Φιλολογίας και Φιλοσοφίας απέναντι στη διδασκαλία της Ιστορίας. Επιπλέον, προτείνει ένα έγκυρο και αξιόπιστο εργαλείο για τη μέτρηση των στάσεων των αυριανών εκπαιδευτικών απέναντι στη διδασκαλία της Ιστορίας στη δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση. Η κατασκευή του εργαλείου αποσκοπεί στο να εκπληρώσει την αναγκαιότητα μέτρησης των στάσεων των εκπαιδευτικών Ιστορίας, αναφορικά με τέσσερις διαστάσεις: άγχος, αυτο-αποτελεσματικότητα, αντιλαμβανόμενα οφέλη και αντιλαμβανόμενες δυσκολίες, που, σύμφωνα με την ανασκόπηση της βιβλιογραφίας, επιδρούν στις στάσεις των εκπαιδευτικών απέναντι στη διδασκαλία της Ιστορίας. Η διερευνητική παραγοντική ανάλυση έδειξε ικανοποιητική εγκυρότητα και αξιοπιστία στην κατασκευή του εργαλείου. Η ανάλυση των ερευνητικών δεδομένων έδειξε ότι οι αυριανοί εκπαιδευτικοί παρουσιάζουν μέτρια επίπεδα άγχους και αυτο-αποτελεσματικότητας. Επιπρόσθετα, αναγνωρίζουν τα οφέλη από τη διδασκαλία της Ιστορίας στη διανοητική ανάπτυξη των μαθητών και στην κοινωνική ευημερία, μολονότι αντιλαμβάνονται την Ιστορία ως ένα απαιτητικό μάθημα μέσα στο σχολικό πρόγραμμα σπουδών. Τα*

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*ερευνητικά αποτελέσματα προτάσσουν την περαιτέρω έρευνα στο πεδίο και υπαγορεύουν την υποστήριξη των αυριανών εκπαιδευτικών Ιστορίας με ακαδημαϊκά μαθήματα, εστιασμένα στο περιεχόμενο και τη διδακτική μεθοδολογία της Ιστορίας, προγράμματα πρακτικής άσκησης, και τη συμβουλευτική υποστήριξή τους κατά τη διάρκεια των ακαδημαϊκών τους σπουδών.*

**Λέξεις-κλειδιά:** Ιστορία, στάσεις, διδασκαλία, αυριανοί εκπαιδευτικοί, δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση

## Introduction

In recent years, scientific research is being extensively occupied in the study of teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of various school subjects. More and more researches demonstrate the significance of positive teachers' attitudes in effective teaching and learning (Ulug, Ozden & Eryilmaz, 2011; Bhargava, & Pathy, 2014; Atalmış & Köse, 2018). The present study is focused on teachers' attitudes towards teaching History, taking into account the fact that History is a core subject in the curriculum of formal - primary and secondary- education in Greece.

The teaching of History, depending on the educational policy and the current legislative framework in each country, which are both reflected in educators' teaching culture and students' learning outcomes, can be treated with a different perspective that dictates not only the choice of the subject content, but also the appropriate methodological approach. For instance, in the Greek educational system, History is a distinct subject in the curriculum of primary and secondary education, having its own specific teaching objectives, which are independent of those of other school subjects, but in accordance with the general educational objectives. According to the Institute of Educational Policy (n.d.), the teaching of History is mainly oriented towards the development of historical thinking and historical consciousness. In other countries, though, History is being taught from a different perspective, as part of an interdisciplinary course of Social Sciences, which concerns the study and co-examination of historical, political, economic, anthropological, social and geographical issues. In this case, the focus shifts to matters of social understanding and civic education (Yilmaz, 2008).

There are several university departments in Greece that qualify students to teach History in secondary education. Browsing curricula in Student's Guides, it becomes evident that, except for History-orientated university departments (e.g., Department of History and Ethnology), most departments offer a maximum of three History subjects

over four years of studies. It seems, therefore, that History is not a core subject in all educational departments, nor is it compulsory for all students. For example, in the Department of Philology (Department of Letters) of the University of Patras students can choose between History courses, among a list of other subjects, which are offered during their years of study. Other Departments (e.g., the Department of Philosophy) occasionally offer optional History subjects, depending on the annual disposable financial funds of the faculty. In other words, the teaching of the above courses is assigned to contract teachers, who are hired on a fixed-term employment relationship, for the needs of a specific semester, according to the curriculum.

Research on teachers' attitudes towards teaching History with the use of an adequate attitude scale as a research instrument is limited. Some studies investigate in-service (Dakopoulou, Kafka & Maniati, 2015; Harris & Burn, 2016; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Namamba & Rao, 2017) and preservice (Virta, 2001; Boadu, 2015; Donmez, Yesilbursa & Altikulac, 2015; Tallavaara & Rautiainen, 2020; Paricio, García-Ceballos & Rubio-Navarro, 2022) teachers' views and perceptions about teaching History in primary and secondary education. However, few of them focus on teachers' attitudes towards teaching History, as a distinct teaching subject of the school curriculum (Kokkinos, Sakka & Trantas, 2007; Woolley, 2017), or even as an interdisciplinary thematic unit in the course of Social Sciences (Zhao & Hoge, 2005; Wilkins, 2009).

This study aims to fill the above research gap and contribute to the scientific discussion on the measurement of teachers' attitudes to teaching History, as a distinct subject in secondary education. What is more, it proposes a research instrument for the measurement of teachers' attitudes to teaching History. Investigating preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History could be of great value to Educational Studies Departments in order to reassess their curricula and proceed to necessary reforms so as to drive up the quality of university courses and ensure that bachelor's degrees equip students with the required teaching skills.

## **1. Literature review**

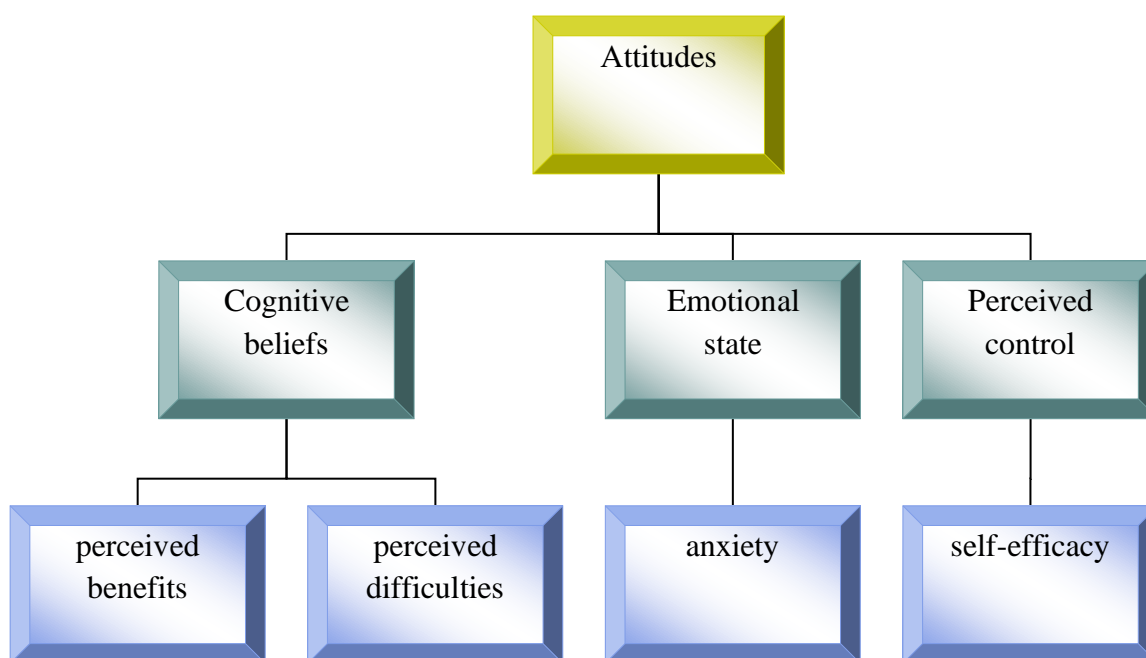
The term "attitude" describes the tendency for a positive or negative evaluation of an object through its inclusion, based on its characteristics, in a category (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Ajzen, 2001). This dimension is important, as it contributes to the conceptual distinction of the term from other similar concepts, (e.g., belief or opinion).

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Attitudes are characterized by stability, they are hard to change and depend on the respective context, which means that they can acquire diametrically opposite characteristics even in related objects (Ramey-Gassert, Shroyer & Staver, 1996; Schoon & Boone, 1998). "Attitude" is a multidimensional concept that consists of several components. The overall attitude for an object emerges as a linear combination of discrete evaluations for each of its components (Ajzen, 2001; Song & Schwarz, 2008). According to Pajares (1992), *when beliefs about objects or situations are grouped creating a predisposition for similar actions, they essentially compose a specific "attitude" as a whole* (p. 314). Therefore, the evaluation of attitudes is composed of the evaluation of individual contributing factors and components.

The present study was based on the theoretical framework for primary teachers' attitudes toward Science developed by Van Aalderen-Smeets, Van der Molen & Asma (2011), which was adjusted, so it could be implemented in History. Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of lessons can be summarized into three basic components: cognitive beliefs, emotional states and perceptual control, which are distinguished in individual dimensions. Cognitive beliefs focus on evaluative judgments and perceptions about the usefulness of teaching a subject, as evidenced by the benefits they reflect in social and everyday life, but also on the difficulty of understanding or teaching it. Emotional states describe the emotional characteristics of attitudes (i.e., emotions and moods), which contribute to the formation of attitudes towards a subject. Perceived control refers to a teacher's degree of control over teaching a lesson (Van Aalderen-Smeets & Van der Molen, 2013).

The literature review refers to four dimensions that have the greatest impact on shaping (preservice and in-service) teachers' attitudes to teaching History (see Figure 1): perceived benefits (cognitive perceptions), perceived difficulties (cognitive beliefs), anxiety (emotional states) and self-efficacy (perceived control).



**Figure 1.** Dimensions of teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of History in secondary education

### *Perceived benefits*

Preservice teachers' beliefs about the nature of subjects, combined with previous educational experiences, influence their scientific and pedagogical approach to them (Van Hover & Yeager, 2004). In particular, the belief that a scientific field can improve social well-being contributes to the formation of a personal attitude towards the subject matter. Teachers have a sense of contribution to meeting the expectations of society and motivate students' efforts for social change (Zhao & Hoge, 2005; Persson & Berg, 2021). Social contribution is one of the factors that influence preservice teachers' motivation to teach History (Akçalı, 2017; Namamba, 2017; Tallavaara & Rautiainen, 2020). At the same time, teaching History is associated with the cultivation of higher mental functions: synthesis, analysis, evaluation, reflection, critical thinking and metacognitive process (Virta, 2001; Krathwohl, 2002; Namamba, 2017; Wijayasari, Kurniawati & Winarsih, 2020). As students move from adolescence into adulthood, they perceive their social identity and adopt a critical stance toward the world around them (Ghosh & Bairagya, 2018). The development of historical thinking cultivates a responsible, active, thoughtful and critical participation in democratic societies, enabling decision making and taking action to address local and global problems (VanSledright, 2004; Yilmaz, 2009; Byfor, Lennon, & Russell, 2009; Dakopoulou,

Kafka & Maniati, 2015; Harris & Burn, 2016; Tosar, 2018). At the same time, it contributes to a broader understanding of political, economic and societal issues, and helps developing a sense of citizenship (Voet & De Wever, 2016). Moreover, the ability to accept different perspectives, develop critical reading and recognize arguments can lead to a better understanding of the world, the appreciation of the national and cultural identity, and the recognition of cultural pluralism (VanSledright, 2004; Yilmaz, 2009; Donmez, Yesilbursa & Altikulac, 2015; Harris & Burn, 2016; Namamba & Rao, 2017; Tallavaara & Rautiainen, 2020).

### *Perceived difficulties*

Judgments about the difficulty of a subject affect the way that teachers operate in the classroom, but also their ability to develop skills, acquire knowledge and shape their attitude towards the subject. The abundance of historical information requires a careful selection of topics suitable for investigation, dialogue, and critical review (Yilmaz, 2009). This difficulty may push novice teachers into a teaching practice with an emphasis on curriculum coverage, guided by lectures and textbooks (Van Hover & Yeager, 2004; Zhao & Hoge, 2005; Köse, 2017; Boadu, Donnelly & Sharp, 2020; Paricio, García-Ceballos & Rubio-Navarro, 2022). The need of memorizing multiple historical facts (Voet & De Wever, 2016) and implementing various teaching methods, depending on historical context, (Ghosh & Bairagya, 2018; Paricio, Garcia-Ceballos & Rubio-Navarro, 2022) is also considered to cause teachers' frustration. Similarly, teaching controversial or sensitive historical issues, those related to society, culture, religion, or nationality, intensifies preservice teachers' sense of insecurity (Misco & Patterson, 2007; Byford, Lennon & Russell, 2009; Lubbe, 2013; Woolley, 2017). Bruno-Jofré and Schiralli (2002) highlight the critical role of the Faculties of Education in preparing candidate History teachers to deal with relevant problems when it comes to classroom reality. Teaching historical aspects that conflict with the values of modern life, such as violence, trauma and pain, is also challenging (Harcourt, 2017). Similar difficulties occur in the treatment of issues of different national, cultural or temporal origins, which require the activation of historical empathy (Seixas, Fromowitz & Hill, 2002). Diversity awareness issues also require connection of historical content with real-life (Yilmaz, 2009). To conclude, teachers' personal and social experiences can create a predisposition for the cognitive encounter with the past, so it is crucial to learn

how to deal with them prior to real classroom conditions (Seixas, Fromowitz & Hill, 2002).

### *Anxiety*

Teachers' attitudes towards subjects, through the expression of positive or negative emotions, seem to influence their teaching behavior. According to Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022), teachers' anxiety is related to the lack of teaching experience, aspects of personality, time management, fear of making mistakes, students' lack of motivation and handling of technical issues. Gorospe (2022) stresses out that the major concern of preservice teachers is their classroom management skills, in terms of dealing effectively with difficult classroom conditions (e.g. disruptive students) and their forthcoming evaluation by the teacher staff. A sense of uncertainty about their adequate preparation before lesson, their actual teaching and evaluation skills and supervisors' expectations were also founded to put pressure on novice teachers (Maulimora, 2019). Matoti & Lekhu (2016) named preparation and lesson delivery, classroom management, supervisors' evaluation and relationship with school teachers as sources of anxiety. Based on Pasaribu & Harendita's (2018) findings, lack of confidence, matters of lesson preparation and execution, students' indifference, classroom management and supervisors' expectations and evaluation were perceived to create anxiety to preservice teachers. Bach and Hagenauer (2022) revealed that anxiety is associated with low levels of self-efficacy, as far as abilities in classroom management and use of instructional strategies are concerned. Specifically, negative emotions related to experiences of stress, anxiety, fear, worry and insecurity significantly affect attitudes towards teaching History. According to Russell (1993), novice teachers are often faced with psychological and pedagogical struggles. Preservice teachers' anxiety during internship has been identified as a significant factor with long-term consequences for the perceptions about teaching. Findings from empirical studies connect high levels of teachers' stress with behavioral management, classroom control, heavy workload, insufficient material resources and lack of support (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003; Van Hover & Yeager, 2004; Lubbe, 2012; Lubbe, 2013; Boadu, 2014). Likewise, sources of intense emotional stress (e.g. lesson planning, material preparation, interaction with students) can create nervousness and lead to exhaustion (Boadu, 2014).

### *Self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy consists of the perception of one's ability to cope with challenges or situations that involve difficulty and intensity (Bandura, 1997). In essence, it is a generalization of self-confidence, as it reflects the impression of one's dynamics based on experiences, skills and knowledge. In the context of the teaching profession, it is related to teachers' beliefs about their ability to take on specific teaching tasks (Pendergast, Garvis & Keogh, 2011; Barni, Danioni & Benevene, 2019). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) emphasize the effect of self-efficacy on learning outcomes, and teachers' behavior regarding teaching actions and teaching methods. Research on preservice teachers shows a high degree of self-efficacy and motivation for teaching History (Yilmaz, 2009; Akçalı, 2017). Highly positive attitudes can be a component of sympathy for the profession, the value teachers attach to it, as well as their belief in success (Akbaba, 2013). Increasing prospective teachers' level of motivation and developing positive attitudes towards the teaching profession can enhance their sense of self-efficacy in Social Sciences, which is a fact that underscores the role of qualitative university education (Recepoğlu & Ibret, 2021). On the other hand, inadequate university education in effective teaching strategies - in combination with previous school-year experiences - reinforces a traditional method of teaching and is likely to lead to a decrease in confidence about the ability to teach the subject (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995). For this reason, Calkins, Yoder and Wiens (2021) point out the need to enrich Social Sciences teachers' training programs with elements of general pedagogy and interdisciplinary skills. At the same time, the aim of the Social Sciences internship is associated with stimulating prospective teachers' self-efficacy (Topkaya, 2017). According to Haverback (2017), understanding preservice Social Sciences teachers' knowledge and beliefs about teaching, and boosting their cognitive experiences in the field can enhance their sense of self-efficacy. Besides, Goddard, Hoy and Hoy (2000) found that teachers possess an inherent motivation and enthusiasm to engage in the teaching of Social Sciences. In conclusion, teachers' persistence in the classroom may be the result of their beliefs regarding their ability to teach (Haverback, 2017).

## **2. Research objectives**

Taking into account the lack of a research instrument for measuring preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History and the limited research data regarding the investigation of History teachers' attitudes, the present research aims to:



- a. present and investigate the factorial structure and reliability of a research instrument to measure preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History,
- b. investigate preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History in secondary education.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Research procedure**

The current work is a quantitative cross-sectional survey (Bryman, 2016), which was implemented at the University Campus of Patras from November to December 2021. Convenient sampling was chosen for the research, due to researchers' easy access to the University of Patras. The research population consisted of students studying at the Departments of Philology (Department of Letters) and Philosophy. Both Departments lead to a bachelor's degree that qualifies teachers to teach History in secondary education. The research data were collected with the support of a cloud-based questionnaire, which was created using the free online application "Google Forms". The questionnaire was administrated to the participants through a hyperlink which was sent via their university e-mails. The completion of each questionnaire by students lasted about six minutes.

For the creation and administration of the research instrument to participants, personal data protection issues were taken into account, following the General Regulation of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Patras. More precisely, students were asked for their consent in order to participate in the survey. At the same time, they were informed that the questionnaire is anonymous and that the data collected will be used exclusively for research purposes.

#### **3.2 Research instrument**

In order to evaluate preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History, a scale was constructed which was based on the theoretical model proposed by Van Aalderen-Smeets, Van der Molen & Asma (2011). The rationale for designing the research instrument was the prospect of being used for the evaluation of History teachers' attitudes in general, both in-service and preservice ones. Previous studies on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and feelings towards History teaching were taken into account (Krathwohl, 2002; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003; Van Hover & Yeager, 2004; VanSledright,

2004, Yilmaz, 2008; Byfor, Lennon, & Russell, 2009; Akbaba, 2013; Boadu, 2014; Akçali, 2017; Namamba & Rao, 2017). Moreover, for the construction of the research instrument the specific objectives of teaching History in Greek secondary education (Institute of Educational Policy, n.d.), as well as previous research on the specific frame (i.e. requirements) of teaching History were taken into account (Seixas, Fromowitz & Hill, 2002; Van Hover & Yeager, 2004; Zemelman, Daniels & Hodge, 2005; Misco & Patterson, 2007; Harcourt, 2017; Woolley, 2017).

The scale was constructed based on four dimensions that contribute to the formation of teachers' overall attitude towards History in secondary education. Four items were formulated for measuring each dimension (see Table 2): a) perceived benefits (e.g. Teaching History is important for cultivating students' democratic consciousness), b) perceived difficulties (e.g. The complexity of historical concepts makes it difficult to teach History effectively in school), c) anxiety (e.g. Teaching History stresses me out) and d) self-efficacy (e.g. I have a good knowledge of the content of History, to teach it at school). Participants could specify their level of agreement to each of sixteen items using a Likert-type response scale of five points: "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neither disagree nor agree", "agree" and "strongly agree". To support face validity (Bryman, 2016) a first version of the research instrument was administrated to two researchers, who are acquainted with teaching History, in order to investigate the items' adequacy and matching to the corresponding dimensions. Researchers' scores suggested that all items are included in the instrument as well as some slight modifications to the wording of the items. Finally, a pilot survey was conducted, before the main one, in which five students participated. After completing the questionnaire, all students were interviewed regarding their opinions about the content and wording of items. Students' responses indicated no points that need to be reconstructed in the questionnaire. In addition, these students were not included in the final sample.

### **3.3 Participants**

The research sample consists of 120 students who study at the Departments of Philology (Department of Letters) and Philosophy, which are part of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Patras. The Departments of Philology (Department of Letters) and Philosophy, in addition to the Departments of History, prepare students to teach History in secondary schools. According to their curricula, History subjects are

optional for students. Furthermore, no internships are provided for them during their university education. Of the total number of respondents 23 (19,2%) were male and 97 (80,8%) were female. Eighty-four participants (70%) were first-year students, twenty-eight (23,3%) were in their third year of study, there was one fourth-year student (0,8%) and, finally, seven students (5,8%) were about to graduate.

### **3.4 Data analysis strategy**

The data were analyzed using SPSS software (Field, 2013). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized to determine the factorial structure of preservice teachers' responses. Initially, parallel analysis (O'Connor, 2000) was used to determine the number of factors (subscales) that should be retained. In this method, two thousand datasets were generated based on permutations of the raw data and using a principal component analysis method the 95% confidence interval of the eigenvalues was calculated. Subsequently, to extract the factorial structure of the teachers' responses to the 16 items of the questionnaire, according to the previous parallel analysis, a factorial analysis was performed, using the principal component analysis method with oblique rotation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Reliability was assessed with Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients. Values of the CR greater than .7 indicate satisfactory reliability (Raykov, 1997). Regarding the final factorial structure, a series of bivariate correlation analyses were performed (Field, 2013).

## **4. Results**

Table 2 presents the distribution of preservice teachers' responses on sixteen items. According to research data, preservice teachers present moderate levels of self-efficacy in teaching History (Q1 to Q4). Many of them feel that their education in university has provided them with adequate historical knowledge for being able to support their future pupils at school in a satisfactory manner and, even, try on new instructional methods. In addition, a lot of students perceive the benefits of History teaching in secondary education (Q5 to Q8). Particularly, the vast majority of students highly believe that History is a crucial subject for cultivating democratic and humanistic values in society, as well as for the development of students' critical thinking skills, in order to deal with controversial issues of the modern world. As far as students' emotional state is concerned, most of them claim to be overwhelmed with strong to moderate feelings of

stress, fear, anxiety and insecurity, because they will be confronted with teaching History in their future school careers (Q9 to Q12). Finally, following students' perceptions about the difficulties of History as a school subject, a greater number of them contend that teaching History can be demanding, because of difficulties emerging from its components, such as complex concepts, amount of historical information, management of historical sources and topics (Q13 to Q16).

**Table 2:** *Distribution of preservice teachers' responses in the 16 statements*

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q1.</b> I am able to answer well students' questions and queries about History.	1.7%	5.8%	39.2%	46.7%	6.7%
<b>Q2.</b> I have a good knowledge of the content of History in order to teach it in school.	8.3%	24.2%	37.5%	27.5%	2.5%
<b>Q3.</b> I have sufficient knowledge of the historical material to be able to adequately support students in their activities.	5.0%	18.3%	40.0%	34.2%	2.5%
<b>Q4.</b> The knowledge and skills that I have acquired in History can support my experimentation with innovative teaching methods and techniques.	4.2%	20.0%	34.2%	35.8%	5.8%
<b>Q5.</b> History teaching in secondary education is necessary so that students are more actively involved in the problems of modern society.	0.8%	1.7%	10.0%	45.0%	42.5%
<b>Q6.</b> History teaching in secondary education is important for the development of students' critical thinking.	0.0%	2.5%	15.0%	38.3%	44.2%
<b>Q7.</b> History teaching is important for the prevalence of humanistic values in society.	0.0%	1.7%	16.7%	43.3%	38.3%
<b>Q8.</b> History teaching is important for the cultivation of students' democratic consciousness.	0.0%	1.7%	22.5%	40.8%	35.0%
<b>Q9.</b> I feel nervous at the thought of having	16.7%	26.7%	25.0%	17.5%	14.2%

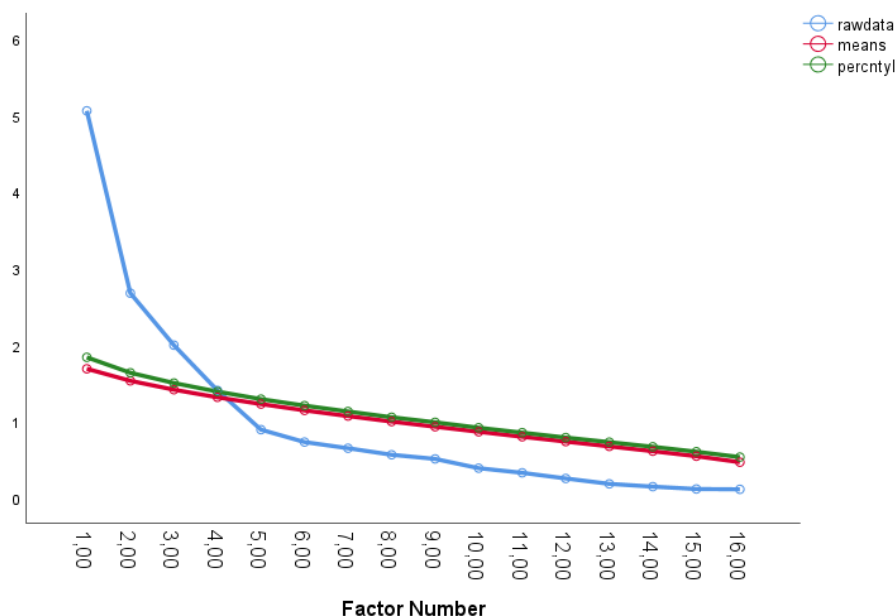
to teach History at school.

<b>Q10.</b> Teaching History stresses me out.	12.5%	28.3%	26.7%	24.2%	8.3%
<b>Q11.</b> I am afraid to teach History in school.	15.0%	27.5%	29.2%	20.8%	7.5%
<b>Q12.</b> Teaching History causes me insecurity.	15.8%	29.2%	30.0%	16.7%	8.3%
<b>Q13.</b> Most secondary school teachers find it difficult to teach History.	2.5%	16.7%	37.5%	29.2%	14.2%
<b>Q14.</b> History in terms of its content is a demanding teaching subject (e.g. complexity of historical topics. difficulty in understanding concepts).	0.8%	8.3%	16.7%	50.0%	24.2%
<b>Q15.</b> The complexity of historical concepts makes it difficult to effectively teach the subject at school.	0.8%	17.5%	29.2%	38.3%	14.2%
<b>Q16.</b> Memorizing a lot of information in History makes it difficult for teachers to teach it.	0.8%	15.8%	27.5%	32.5%	23.3%

Note: 1. Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree

#### 4.1 Factorial structure of preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching history

Figure 2 presents the screeplot of the raw data. Particularly, for the four first factors, eigenvalues (5.05, 2.67, 1.99, and 1.41) are above the corresponding 95<sup>th</sup> percentile estimates created by the simulation. Therefore, four factors should be retained from the factor analysis.



**Figure 2.** Scree plots of parallel analysis with 2000 random samples from actual data

To extract the factorial structure of the 16 items for these four factors the principal component analysis method was deployed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $p < 0.01$ ) indicated that the correlation between the items is adequate for factor analysis as well as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin ( $KMO = .784$ ) and Measure Sample Adequacy (MSA at least .6) revealed that preservice teachers' responses define a satisfactory factorial structure (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). To identify a simpler structure pattern, the oblique rotation was used, since the factor analysis indicated non-negligible correlations among the factors. Table 3 shows all the items grouped as we initially identified with absolute factor loadings greater than 0.5 without cross-loadings, indicating good convergent and discriminant validity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The factorial structure of four factors explains 69.4% of the total variation (Factor 1=31.59%, Factor 2=16.71%, Factor 3=12.47%, and Factor 4=8.77%). Therefore, Factor 1 represents students' anxiety, Factor 2 corresponds to perceived benefits of History teaching, Factor 3 represents students' self-efficacy and Factor 4 corresponds to perceived difficulties of History as a school subject. Finally, the composite reliability for each factor exceeds the threshold .7 so all factors present satisfactory reliability.

**Table 3:** Factorial structure, loadings, communalities, extracted variance and Composite Reliability

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Communalities
Q10	.946				.896
Q12	.941				.850
Q11	.918				.887
Q9	.856				.845
Q7		.866			.746
Q6		.834			.717
Q5		.778			.653
Q8		.760			.571
Q4			.866		.660
Q3			.857		.760
Q2			.833		.835
Q1			.686		.573
Q15				.808	.678
Q13				.676	.476
Q16				.589	.429
Q14				.569	.548
Variance	31.59%	16.71%	12.47%	8.77%	
Composite reliability	.954	.884	.886	.759	

Table 4 presents all Pearson product-moment correlations among variables (four Factors). Regarding the mean score for each factor, a medium level of preservice teachers' anxiety is observed and, simultaneously, a medium level of self-efficacy for teaching History. Moreover, preservice teachers perceive some difficulties but acknowledge that teaching History could offer more benefits to students. Specifically, it is observed that the higher the students' anxiety, the less the perceived benefits from History teaching at school and their sense of self-efficacy as prospective History teachers. On the other hand, as students' anxiety increases so their perceptions about History tend to focus on its difficulties as a school subject.

**Table 4:** *Descriptive statistics and Pearson product correlations among variables*

Factors	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Anxiety_F1	2.81	1.11	1		
2. Perceived_Benefits_F2	4.20	.65	-.218*	1	
3. Self_efficacy_F3	3.18	.75	-.423**	.211*	1
4. Perceived_difficulties_F4	3.58	.66	.330**	.002	-.076

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .001$

## 5. Discussion of the results

The first aim of the current research was to develop a research instrument and investigate its factorial structure and reliability in measuring preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History. Secondly, the research instrument was used to investigate preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History in secondary education.

At first, the research instrument of sixteen items was found to have satisfactory construct validity and reliability. This instrument presents four dimensions of teachers' attitudes towards teaching History in a satisfactory manner, and can be utilized to measure with reliability and validity these dimensions: perceived benefits, perceived difficulties, anxiety and self-efficacy, which are represented in other research instruments measuring teachers' attitudes towards various school subjects (Van Aalderen-Smeets, Van der Molen & Asma, 2011). Therefore, the instrument covers the educational need to measure attitudes towards teaching History, filling the set of other research instruments that measure teachers' attitudes. Nevertheless, to confirm its factorial structure, further research needs to be conducted in Greece and abroad.

Afterward, the analysis of the research results revealed that preservice teachers' do not demonstrate a clear emotional state as regards teaching History. Specifically, their perceptions about teaching History do not seem to be directly influenced by the factor of anxiety. These results do not accord with those of previous research, which indicate high levels of preservice History teachers' anxiety during their teaching practice, due to heavy workload and insufficiency in effective teaching skills and strategies (Van Hover & Yeager, 2004; Boadu, 2014). Lubbe (2012; 2013) also observed History teachers' high-stress levels, because of the challenges deriving from the working conditions in secondary education and the demanding nature of History.



Preservice teachers acknowledge the contribution of teaching History to students' development. These findings comply with those of previous research, which reveal the role of History in the development of higher-order thinking skills (Virta, 2001; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Namamba & Rao, 2017; Wijayasari, Kurniawati & Winarsih, 2020), the cultivation of democratic consciousness and citizenship (Dakopoulou, Kafka & Maniati, 2015), cultural and humanistic values that contribute to social prosperity (Akçalı, 2017; Namamba & Rao, 2017), the understanding of contemporary issues (Virta, 2001; Donmez, Yesilbursa & Altikulac, 2015; Harris & Burn, 2016; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Namamba & Rao, 2017; Tallavaara & Rautiainen, 2020), and the perspective for active involvement in public affairs (Zhao & Hoge, 2005; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Akçalı, 2017). On the other hand, Donmez, Yesilbursa & Altikulac (2015) stated that preservice teachers did not mention effective citizenship, democratic consciousness and historical thinking as the main purposes of History teaching.

Self-efficacy is an important dimension of students' attitudes regarding the teaching of History. Specifically, it seems that the confidence students show in their university education and the received historical knowledge is deficient. This means that universities must find ways to improve and increase students' self-efficacy beliefs in order to teach History more diligently and successfully (Plourde, 2002, as cited in Haverback, 2017). In addition, this improvement will lead students themselves to better meet the requirements of the course during their studies (Recepoglou & Ibret, 2021). Moreover, a significant part of students are unable to adopt experimentation in the subject of History, which is different in the case of teachers who already teach and have a positive attitude towards the use of new teaching methods (Topkava, 2017).

Preservice teachers' perceptions about difficulties in teaching History are aligned with related research, which indicate the coverage of History content, included in textbooks and dictated by the curriculum, on the one hand, (Van Hover & Yeager, 2004; Harris & Burn, 2016; Boadu, Donnelly & Sharp, 2020; Paricio, García-Ceballos & Rubio-Navarro, 2022), and the memorization of the amount of historical information, on the other hand, as factors challenging preservice and novice teachers' towards teaching History (Yilmaz, 2008; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Köse, 2017; Tallavaara & Rautiainen, 2020; Paricio, García-Ceballos & Rubio-Navarro, 2022). The difficulty of implementing innovative teaching methods (e.g., student-centered, inquiry-based) on History content (Ghosh & Bairagya, 2018; Paricio, García-Ceballos & Rubio-Navarro,

2022) may explain why many teachers insist on narrative approaches to teaching (Samuelsson, 2019; Boadu, 2020; Boadu, G., Donnelly, D. & Sharp, H., 2020). The pedagogical management of emotive and controversial issues that contradict the cultural values of a society can also be challenging (Misco & Patterson, 2007; Byford, Lennon & Russell, 2009; Lubbe, 2012; Harcourt, 2017). Conversely, Wolley (2017) noted that beginning history teachers were confident to deal with controversial topics in the classroom.

## **6. Implications and limitations**

History is a core subject in the Greek educational system and constitutes an independent subject in the school curriculum. In other educational systems abroad History is incorporated into the Social Studies course and is taught in an interdisciplinary way along with other relevant subjects (e.g. economics, geography, anthropology, etc.). Despite History's central position in Greek secondary education and teachers' perceptions about the benefits deriving from its teaching, the present research reveals that preservice teachers recognize some difficulties relevant to the nature of the subject. Furthermore, their responses indicate a medium level of self-efficacy in teaching History. Taking into account previous research results that ascribe History teachers' difficulties to inadequate skills development during their university education (Bruno-Jofré & Schiralli, 2002; Trombino, 2010; Wijayasari, Kurniawati & Winarsih, 2020), we recommend that university departments utilize the research instrument for measuring students' attitudes towards teaching History, in order to reevaluate their didactic strategies and the content of academic courses (Van Hover & Yeager, 2004). In addition, research results could be taken into account for a prospective reform of the university curricula addressed to History teachers in secondary education, to integrate internship programs, in order to provide students with opportunities for skills acquisition through real-class learning experiences (Van Hover & Yeager, 2004). An emphasis on the historical content, as well as appropriate teaching strategies for broader student engagement, could enhance preservice teachers' perceptions about the benefits of History learning, strengthen their teaching skills, empower their sense of self-efficacy, assist them to overcome the challenges, reduce their negative feelings, and improve their general attitude towards teaching History. Furthermore, universities' Counselling Services could play a supportive role to students, regarding students'

negative feelings related to teaching (Gold, 1996, as cited in Han Hover & Yeager, 2004). Dealing effectively with such emotional states (e.g. stress management), supports self-efficacy development and high-performance achievement. Additionally, research results may be exploited by national educational institutions to organize initial and in-service training courses, as well as provide ongoing, long-term mentoring to teachers aiming to their professional development, skills enhancement and knowledge updating. Initial training is a key factor in forming positive student teachers' attitudes towards their profession (Bhargava & Pathy, 2014).

The main limitation is the small and not representative sample size, as well as the fact that the participants as volunteers could lead to biased responses (Lavidas & Gialamas, 2019). Therefore, we suggest that the sample of students be expanded, involving students at more universities in Greece and abroad, to become more representative of the population. Complementary research on preservice teachers' attitudes would lead to more accurate results about their perceptions of teaching History in secondary education. Moreover, we are obliged to remind you that the research instrument, which was constructed for the current research, needs to be utilized in future projects, in order for its validity and accuracy to be confirmed. It would also be considerable to expand the research instrument, in order to investigate more components of teachers' attitudes that relate to the nature of the subject matter and its teaching requirements, as well as students' university education. Finally, taking for granted the importance of History learning in adopting socially acceptable attitudes and developing skills to harmonically coexist with each other in a multicultural world, we consider that further research should be held in the field. Investigating preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching History, both in primary and secondary education, could direct educational policies and strategies with the aim of a more effective teaching and student learning at all levels of education.

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