



## Empathic Tendencies of Pre-Service Physical Education and Sports Teachers

Cansel Arslanoglu \*  
Sinop University, TURKEY

Ahmet Mor  
Sinop University, TURKEY

*Received: May 19, 2018 • Revised: July 5, 2018 • Accepted: July 15, 2018*

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to investigate the empathic tendency levels of physical education teacher candidates according to some variables. Study group consists of 117 pre service physical education and sports students (74 women and 43 men) of Kafkas University in the fall semester of 2015/2016 academic year. "Personal Information Form" and the "Empathic Tendency Scale" which developed by Dokmen was used to collect data. In the evaluation of data, firstly, normality hypothesis and Shapiro Wilk and Levene tests for homogeneity of variances have been used. In paired comparisons, independent samples t-test and in comparison of more than one group, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey multiple comparison test have been used. SPSS 21 statistical package program was used and the results were considered significant at  $p < 0.05$  level. As a result of the study, it can be said that gender, age, class, place of education, parent education level and family monthly income variables did not affect the empathic tendency levels of the physical education teacher candidates.

**Keywords:** *Empathic tendency, physical education, pre-service teacher.*

**To cite this article:** Arslanoglu, C., & Mor, A. (2018). Empathic tendencies of pre-service physical education and sports teachers. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 7(3), 689-694. doi: 10.12973/eu-jer.7.3.689

### Introduction

Good education is an important element of societal development. Education have many important goals and one of them is to train sensitive and understanding individuals who have communication ability in society. It is possible by bringing the concept of empathy. Empathy has been described by researchers in different forms that determines relationship between people and social life. Empathy means, being aware of the thoughts and feelings of the others and their possible meanings (Solak, 2011). It is skills that both children and adults must have in order to establish healthy relationships with other people. For the development of interpersonal relationships, it is important that the individual can realize the feelings of himself/herself and others (Onder and Gulay, 2007).

Empathy has been defined in different forms in the historical process. Studying empathy throughout his professional life, the understanding of empathy Rogers reached in the 70's years has today become a recognition that most researchers working on the subject have agreed on. According to this definition, which does not have a solid quality, empathy is evaluated as the process that, person puts himself or herself in the place of the person opposite, understanding that person's feelings and thoughts correctly, feeling them and conveying this situation to that person (Dokmen, 2005). Barrett Lennard (1993) stated that this process took place in four stages while empathizing with the individual. The first stage is an individual's realizing and understanding of his or her feelings; the second stage is establishing communication; the third stage is the individual's feeling that he or she is heard and understood; the fourth is the individual's self-expression (Mete and Gercek, 2005).

The concept of empathy is generally described as the adequacy of understanding the feelings of another person and psychologically perceive the role without impersonating (Barut, 2004). Those who have the ability to empathize are more successful than those who cannot develop empathy; they get along well with other people, fight less and share more. People who do not develop empathy do not care about the feelings of other people. In addition, empathy enables the decrease aggressive behavior (Ozbek, 2003). Duru (2004) states that as the level of empathic tendency rises, the behavior of helping people also increases. In this sense, empathy should not be regarded as an activity that is merely beneficial to the person to whom empathy is shown; empathy is also very important for the person who will show empathy (Dincyurek, 2004; Kocak and Onen, 2013). The individuals, whose empathy skills are developed, also perform communication performances at a high level in business and social environments (Dogan et al., 2010).

#### \* Corresponding author:

Cansel Arslanoglu, Sinop University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Sinop, Turkey.  
Email: [canseloglu@sinop.edu.tr](mailto:canseloglu@sinop.edu.tr)

Empathy for the teacher emerges as an important feature in order to know the student and to make a student-centered education or even to plan appropriate training for his or her group. The teacher should be both empathetic and clear in his or her communication with the child. He or she should be able to express himself or herself well and use communication skills to collaborate (Saltali and Erbay, 2013). When the teaching profession is compared to some other professions, teachers need to have more empathic skills. The most important part of teachers' roles is to create a positive and safe classroom atmosphere by taking care of students, establishing empathic relations with them, entering their personal worlds (Akbulut and Saglam, 2010). Teachers should not expect their students to earn and use the empathic tendency levels on their own; they should contribute to their development.

The relationship between the teaching profession and the empathic tendency is known to be of great importance for teacher candidates who are studying at teacher training institutions. In literature, Physical Education and Sport Departments have high life quality (Kirgiz et al, 2004). Particularly, physical education teaching, which is achieved with a special aptitude test and requires a certain amount of sports accumulation, focuses on understanding and interpreting students in the best possible way. It is necessary that physical education teachers also put themselves in the place of students and understand them to improve the empathic skills. In this sense, there is a great deal of work for physical education teachers and teacher candidates. When we regard physical education teachers as "self-confident individuals who are able to act appropriately in any social situation, who can correctly and fully interpret the emotional expressions of other individuals, who are affected emotionally by other individuals and empathically express the emotional states of others, individuals who have close, social or conversational skills to initiate and direct conversations on any topic" (Avsar, 2004) improving the empathic tendency levels of students depends on training physical education teachers that have these skills.

When the literature is examined, although there are many pieces of research made with the empathic tendency, the studies that are concerned with candidates are limited. Based on this, the aim of this research is to examine the empathic tendency levels of the physical education and sports teacher candidates in terms of some variables.

## Methodology

### *Research Goal*

Screening model was used in this study. The event, subject to the study is defined as it is in its own conditions. It includes data collection to test hypotheses or answer questions regarding the situation in the study (Nazik and Arli, 2004).

### *Research Group*

Study consists of 117 (43 men, 74 women) teacher candidates having education in Kafkas University Physical Education and Sports Department in 2015-2016 academic year. Students from different class participated into the study (1<sup>st</sup> grade 19, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade 37, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade 36, 4<sup>th</sup> grade 25).

### *Collection of Data*

The means of data collection in the survey were applied to the students on a voluntary basis after explaining the content and purpose of the study. It was applied at the end of the exam on the last day of the fall semester midterm examinations. As a data collection tool, the Personal Information Form developed by the researchers and the Empathic Tendency Scale which was developed by Dokmen (1988), were applied to the participants.

### *Personal Information Form*

It has been prepared by the researchers to learn some of the variables of the participants who were thought to be influential in the research. The empathic tendency levels were examined according to the variables of gender, age, class, place of education, educational status of parents and family monthly income.

### *Empathic Tendency Scale (ETS)*

Empathic Tendency Scale was developed by Dokmen (1988) to measure the empathy in daily life. It is consist of 20 likert type questions and each one is scored 1 to 5. The questions 3., 6., 7., 8., 11., 12., 13., 15 are added up in reverse. The score is between 20-100. The reliability of ETS was achieved by Dokmen (1988) applying to 70 people for three weeks using the scale re-test method. The reliability of the scale was found 0,82 at the end of the analysis made. The scale reliability among participants' scores on single and double scales were found 86. The validity study of ETS was again done by Dokmen (1988). Calculated repetitive Cronbach Alpha value of the Empathic Tendency Scale (EMS) inventory applied in the study was found to be 0,771.

### *Analyzing of Data*

Shapiro Wilk and Levene tests were applied to the data obtained from the study first to check the hypothesis of normality and the homogeneity assumptions of variances ( $P > 0.05$ ). Independent sample t-test was used in paired

comparisons and one-way ANOVA. In all statistical calculations, SPSS 21 statistical package program was used and significant level was calculated as  $p < 0.05$ .

### Findings / Results

Table 1. The empathic tendency levels according to gender variable.

Empathic Tendency Levels	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SS	t	P-value
	Male	43	67,86	7,92	1,053	0,295
	Female	74	69,44	7,73		

In Table 1, there was no significance in gender variable based on the result of the t-test. ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 2. The empathic tendency levels according to "the place of education" variable.

Empathic Tendency Levels	The place of education	N	$\bar{x}$	SS	Minimum	Maximum	P-value
	City	56	68,58	7,69	50,00	82,00	0,781
	District	54	69,33	8,18	50,00	88,00	
	Village	7	67,42	6,37	61,00	81,00	

In table 2, no significant differences in "the place of education" variable based on the ANOVA test. ( $p > 0,05$ ).

Table 3. The empathic tendency levels according to age variable.

Empathic Tendency Levels	Age	N	$\bar{x}$	SS	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
	17-18 years	5	67,10	8,12	60,00	79,00	0,239
	19 years	17	67,11	5,98	58,00	78,00	
	20 years	50	68,62	7,75	50,00	82,00	
	21 years	22	68,95	9,09	50,00	88,00	
	22 and above	23	72,08	7,47	57,00	85,00	

According to Table 3, the empathic tendency levels of the participants do not show significance according to age ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, it is seen that empathic tendency levels are improved in parallel with age.

Table 4. The empathic tendency levels according to class variable.

Empathic Tendency Levels	Grade	N	$\bar{x}$	SS	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
	Grade 1	19	67,94	8,36	53,00	88,00	0,875
	Grade 2	37	68,48	7,50	55,00	82,00	
	Grade 3	36	69,28	8,18	50,00	85,00	
	Grade 4	25	70,40	3,84	64,00	74,00	

When Table 4 is examined, the empathic tendency levels according to the class variable points do not show significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, it is observed that the levels of empathic tendency gradually develop between 1st and 4th grade.

Table 5. The empathic tendency levels according to "educational status of mothers" variable.

Empathic Tendency Levels	Educational status of mother	N	$\bar{x}$	SS	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
	Not literate	14	68,85	5,27	61,00	79,00	0,557
	Elementary school	60	69,11	8,35	50,00	88,00	
	Secondary school	25	67,88	7,24	58,00	82,00	
	High school	15	67,93	8,48	50,00	81,00	
	University	2	78,50	9.19	72,00	85,00	
	Graduate	1	73,00	-	73,00	73,00	

According to Table 5, there was no difference found according to educational status ( $p > 0.05$ ). The average score of empathic tendency of students whose mothers are graduated from university or post graduate education is higher than the others.

Table 6. The empathic tendency levels according to "educational status of fathers" variable.

	Educational status of father	N	$\bar{x}$	SS	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
Empathic Tendency Levels	Not literate	3	70,33	7,50	66,00	79,00	0,363
	Elementary school	47	68,68	6,66	50,00	82,00	
	Secondary school	26	66,46	8,76	53,00	88,00	
	High school	28	70,46	8,13	50,00	81,00	
	University	13	70,53	8,87	57,00	85,00	
	Graduate	-	-	-	-	-	

According to table 6, there was no difference found in the variable of father education status ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 7. The empathic tendency levels according to "monthly income" variable.

	Monthly Income	N	$\bar{x}$	SS	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
Empathic Tendency Levels	1000-1500	24	68,4167	7,45372	57,00	81,00	0,770
	1501-2000	38	68,4474	7,75886	53,00	88,00	
	2001-2500	35	69,7143	6,98979	58,00	82,00	
	2501 ve Uzeri	14	67,4286	10,49333	50,00	85,00	

When Table 7 was examined, there was no significant relationship between the participants' monthly income and empathic tendency levels ( $p > 0,05$ ).

### Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the empathic tendencies of Physical Education Teacher candidates were examined according to gender, age, class, place of education, parent education level and family monthly income variables and the results were discussed. There was no significant difference empathic tendency levels and all the variables mentioned above ( $p > 0,05$ ).

In his study Yilmaz (2008) examined empathic tendency levels according to gender and detected the empathic tendency points averages of the females ( $71.96 \pm 7.41$ ) higher than those of the males ( $71.04 \pm 7.63$ ). However, the difference between them is not significant. In the study conducted by Arslanoglu (2010) and Ekinci (2009), on teacher candidates and in the study conducted by Karabulut and Pulur (2016) on sporters, they stated that empathic tendencies were significant in favor of women; Ayas et al. (2016) and Yasar and Erol (2015) did not find any difference between the genders in their studies. In their research, Turkeli et al. (2017) examined the empathic tendency levels of physical education teacher candidates who had pedagogical formation training and they could not find any significant difference in terms of gender variable. In a different study, Genc (2010), found that there was a difference in the opinions of teacher candidates about the empathic skills according to the gender and teaching styles of their department. However, there was no difference in the empathic skills according to the classes, departments they study, the level of education of their mothers and fathers. In the study that Mutlu et al. (2014) could not find a significant relationship between age, sports age and empathic tendency levels ( $p > 0.05$ ). Also, Yasar and Erol (2015) could not detect a difference in pre-school teachers according to age variable. The study we carried out supports the literature. It is also an expected result that the empathic tendency levels of the individuals whose average age is close to each other do not differ.

In the research Ciftci et al. (2015) conducted; they could not detect a significant difference in the university first-year students' skills of developing empathy and according to these results, they have proposed practical activities, seminars and training studies to improve the skills of university students to communicate and empathize. Tutuk et al. (2002) found that, empathic tendency levels of nursing students increases as the class level increases. Although there was no significant difference in our study, it has been seen that the empathic tendency average scores increased regularly when the class increased. It shows that the students in Physical Education and Sport Department are equipped with more advanced pedagogical formation knowledge and profession skills.

In our study, there is no significant difference in empathic tendency levels according to educational status of participant' parents. Only in educational level of the mother, it has been revealed that the average empathic tendencies of the participants, whose mothers are university graduates, are higher than other graduation statuses. Mothers having higher education level affect their children's empathic tendency levels positively. This result emphasizes the importance of the mother figure in child development.

According to monthly income, no differences were found in the empathetic tendency levels of subjects. In literature, some researchers say that individuals with middle-level income have better empathy (Onay et al. 2015), while others say that there is no such relationship (Carikci and Atilla, 2009). So, our research is valuable in terms of contributing to the literature. There are many other studies done in the literature on empathic tendencies. Some of these are discussed

in this section. In his study, Onay (2015) concluded that the empathic tendency levels of the prospective teachers differed significantly according to the department, in which they had education and family income variables; however, they did not differ according to the gender, age, and place they spend their life in. Yi gitbas and et al. (2013) stated that, health education students were moderate according to empathic tendency levels. Saygili (2015) detected that women teachers had higher levels of empathic tendency than male teachers and married teachers than single teachers. Demirci et al. (2017) conducted, they found that family attitudes were influential on the empathy tendencies of the child development students participating in the research. According to the survey carried out by Turkeli et al. (2017), the empathic tendency levels of physical education teacher candidates who got pedagogical formation training were in favor of the graduates in the comparison between the participants who graduated from university and continued to study at university.

As a result; gender, age, class, place of education, parent education level and family monthly income variables do not affect the empathic tendency levels of physical education teacher candidates. While issues related to the empathic tendency are conveyed to the Physical Education teacher candidates, the adoption of methods through which candidates can put themselves in the place of students during their undergraduate education, can help developing the empathic tendencies of the candidates.

At the end of the study, some suggestions can be given. As Turkeli et al. (2017) mentioned in his study, teaching programs applied in higher education institutions that educate teachers must support the empathic tendency. Learning strategies, methods, and classroom management that are effective in providing students with empathic tendency skills must be included in the activities. The number of courses such as the drama given to improve the empathic tendencies of the physical education teacher candidates must be increased or drama must be used as an expression, teaching method in which the individual is more active. Thus, teacher candidates can be trained as individuals who can think scientifically and critically, and have the skills to develop creativity and participation.

### References

- Akbulut, E., & Saglam, H. I. (2010). An investigation on levels of the emphatic tendencies of classroom teachers. *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 7(2), 1068-1083.
- Apaydin Z. A., & Ikiz, S. (2017). Relationship between communication skills and empathy tendency levels of child development students: Example of bilecik seyh edebali university. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 10(54), 676-685.
- Arslanoglu, C. (2012). *Evaluation of the emphatic tendency levels and agression relationship of physical education and sports students from different departments* (Doctoral Thesis). Gazi University, Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara, Turkey.
- Avsar, Z. (2004). Beden egitimi ve spor ogretmenlerinin sosyal beceri duzeylerinin belirlenmesi [Determination of physical education and sport teachers' social skills]. *Journal of Uludag University Faculty of Education*, 17(2), 111-130.
- Ayas, E. B., Inan, H., Kartal, M., & Gacar A. (2016). Comparing the emphatic tendency levels of sport sciences faculty students in terms of different variables. *International Journal of Social Science*, 53, 459-466.
- Barut, Y. (2004). *Ortaogretim Kurumlarinda Calisan Ogretmenlerin Empatik Egilim Duzeyleri ile Catisma Egilimi Duzeylerinin Bazi Degiskenler Acisindan Incelenmesi*. Malatya: XIII. Ulusal Egitim Bilimleri Kurultayi.
- Carikci, I. H., & Atilla, G. (2009). The relationship of masculinity/femininity dimension with empathic skill. *International Journal of Alanya Faculty of Business*, 1(2), 52-63.
- Ciftci, H. D., Kocak, N., & Duman, G. (2015). Analyzing the relation between communication and empathy skills of undergraduate freshman students in health and social fields. *Cumhuriyet International Journal of Education-CIJE*, 4(1), 50-64.
- Dincyurek, S. (2004). The study of the empathic skills of university students from different variables. *International Journal of Geography and Geography Education*, 10, 99-116.
- Dogan, H., Unguren, E., & Algur, S. (2010). An emprical research in hospitality chain for relationship between anger and empathy. *Journal of Cukurova University Institute of Social Sciences*, 19(3), 277-298.
- Dokmen, U. (1988). *Empatinin bir modele dayandirilarak olculmesi ve psikodrama ile gelistirilmesi* [Measured based on a new model and developed by psychodrama for empathy]. *Ankara University Journal of Faculty of Educational Sciences*, 62(21), 155-190.
- Dokmen U. (2005). *Kucuk Seyler* [Little Things] (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Istanbul: Sistem Yayıncılık.

- Duru, E. (2004). *Ogretmen adaylarinda empati-yardim etme egilimi iliskisi ve yardım etme egiliminin bazı psikososyal degiskenler acisindan incelenmesi* [Investigation of the relationship between empathy and helping tendency in terms of some psychosocial variables]. *Pamukkale University Journal of Education*, 15, 31-41.
- Ekinci, O. (2009). *Analysis of the empathy and the critical thinking disposition of the teacher candidates* (Master's Thesis). Cukurova University, Institute of Social Sciences, Adana, Turkey.
- Genc, Z. S., & Kalafat, T. (2010). Prospective Teachers' Problem Solving Skills and Emphatic Skills. *The Journal of Theoretical Educational Science*, 3(2), 135-147.
- Karabulut, E. O., & Pular, A. (2016). The examination of high level field hockey players' empathetic tendency levels in terms of different variables. *Nigde University Journal of Physical Education and Sport Sciences*, 10(1), 51-58.
- Kirgiz, C., Senel, O., Arslanoglu, E., & Sever, O. (2014). Investigation of Quality of Life of Teaching Staffs in Physical Education and Sport Department, 1(2), 1-6.
- Kocak, C., & Onen, A. S. (2013). Emphatic Tendency Scale for Student Teachers: Validity and Reliability Studies. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 13(2), 958-964.
- Mete, S., & Gercek, E. (2005). The Examination of empathic tendency and skills on nursing students who are educated with PBL method. *Journal of Cumhuriyet University School of Nursing*, 9(2), 11-17.
- Mutlu, T. O., Senturk, H., & Zorba, E. (2014). Empathic Tendency of University Students in Tennis and Communication Skills. *International Journal of Science Culture and Sport*, Special Issue, 129-137.
- Nazik, M., & Arli, M. (2004). *Bilimsel Arastirmaya Giris* [Introduction to Scientific Research]. Ankara: Gazi Kitabevi.
- Onay, I., Eguz, S., & Unal, A. (2015). Investigation of Empathy Tendency of Teacher Candidates According to Some Variables. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 8(40), 564-572.
- Onder, A., & Gulay, H. (2007). Parental acceptance-rejection theory and its importance in terms of individual development. *The Journal of Buca Faculty of Education*, 21, 20-28.
- Ozbek, F. (2003). Isyeri Icerisindeki Sorunlarin Cozumunde Empatik Anlayis Gelistirmek. [Development an empathic understanding in the solution of the problems in the working place]. *ISGUC The Journal of Industrial Relations & Human Resources*, 5(2), 0-0.
- Saltali, N., & Erbay, F. (2013). Examination of speaking, listening, empathy skills of preschool teachers in terms of liking of children. *Ahi Evran University Journal of Kirsehir Education Faculty (KEFAD)*, 14(1), 159 - 174.
- Saygili, G., Kiriktas, H., & Gursoy, H. T. (2015). The level of empathic tendencies of teachers according to different variables. *Bartın University Journal of Faculty Of Education*, 4(1), 73-82.
- Solak, N. (2011). *Examination of the relationship between the levels of aggression and levels of the emphatic tendencies of secondary education students who do sports and those who do not do sports (Corum city case)* (Master's Thesis). Gazi University, Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara, Turkey.
- Turkeli, A., Hazar, Z., Tekkursun Demir, G., & Namli, S. (2017). Examination of the Empathy Tendency Levels of Pedagogical Formation Students in Physical Education and Sports. *Gaziantep University Journal of Sport Science*, 2(4), 12-19
- Tutuk, A., Al, D., & Dogan, S. (2002). Determining communication skills and emphatic levels of nursing students. *Journal of Cumhuriyet University School of Nursing*, 6(2), 36-41.
- Yasar, M., & Erol A. (2015). Determination of Relationship between the Empathic Tendency Levels and Thinking Styles of Preschool Teacher Candidates, *International Journal of Assessment Tools in Education*, 2 (2), 38-65.
- Yigitbas, C., Deveci, S. E., Acik, Y., Ozan, T., & Oguzoncul, A. F. (2013). The empathic tendency and empathic skills of a group of students receiving health education. *SDU The Journal of Health Science*, 4(1), 7-13.
- Yilmaz, I., & Akyel, Y. (2008). Examination of emphatic tendency levels of physical education candidates teacher in terms of different variables. *Ahi Evran University Journal of Kirsehir Education Faculty*, 9(3), 27-33.