

ARAŞTIRMA / RESEARCH

The Relationship Between Nursing Students' Affection towards Children and Basic Empathy and Humor Styles: A Correlational Study*Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Çocuk Sevgisi ile Temel Empati ve Mizah Tarzları Arasındaki İlişki: İlişkisel Bir Çalışma*Vildan APAYDIN CIRIK¹, Uğur GÜL², Bahar AKSOY²¹Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey Üniversitesi, Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi, Ebelik Bölümü, Karaman, Türkiye²Gümüşhane Üniversitesi, Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi, Çocuk Sağlığı Hemşireliği Bölümü, Gümüşhane Türkiye**Geliş tarihi/Received:** 07.04.2021**Kabul tarihi/Accepted:** 08.08.2021**Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding Author:****Vildan APAYDIN CIRIK**, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi
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ORCID: 0000-0003-0466-5918**Abstract****Objective:** Love and affection help children develop a basic sense of trust and healthy personality traits. This paper evaluated the relationship between affection towards children and basic empathy and humor in nursing students.**Material and Method:** This descriptive and correlational study was conducted in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. The sample consisted of 112 nursing students who took the "Child Health and Disease Nursing" course. Participation was voluntary. Data were collected using a Descriptive Information Form, the Barnett Liking of Children Scale (BLOCS), the Basic Empathy Scale (BES), and the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ).**Results:** BLOCS scores were moderately and positively correlated with BES "basic empathy" subscale scores and weakly and positively correlated with BES "affective empathy" subscale scores. BLOCS scores were moderately and negatively correlated with HSQ "aggressive humor" subscale scores and positively correlated with BES "affective empathy" and HSQ "self-enhancing" and "affiliative humor" subscale scores.**Conclusion:** Nursing students' empathy levels (cognitive and affective empathy) and humor styles (affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating humor style) affect their affection towards children. It is of paramount significance to determine nursing students' empathy levels and humor styles to improve pediatric nursing practices.**Keywords:** Humor, child, affection, nursing students.**Öz****Amaç:** Sevgi ve şefkat gören çocuklar sağlam bir güven duygusu ve sağlıklı kişilik özellikleri geliştirirler. Bu çalışmanın amacı hemşirelik öğrencilerinde çocuk sevgisi ile temel empati ve mizah tarzları arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemektir.**Gereç ve Yöntem:** Bu tanımlayıcı ve ilişkisel çalışma 2019-2020 eğitim-öğretim yılının bahar döneminde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmaya "Çocuk Sağlığı ve Hastalıkları Hemşireliği" dersini alan 112 hemşirelik öğrencisi katılmıştır. Katılım gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Veriler, Tanımlayıcı Bilgi Formu, Barnett Çocuk Sevmeye Ölçeği (BCSÖ), Temel Empati Ölçeği (TEÖ) ve Mizah Tarzları Anketi (MTA) ile toplanmıştır.**Bulgular:** BCSÖ puanları, TEÖ "temel empati" alt ölçek puanlarıyla orta ve pozitif yönde ilişkiliyken, TEÖ "duygusal empati" alt ölçek puanlarıyla zayıf ve pozitif yönde ilişkilidir. BCSÖ puanları, MTA "saldırgan mizah" alt ölçek puanlarıyla orta ve negatif yönde ilişkiliyken, TEÖ "duygusal empati" ve MTA "kendini geliştirici mizah" ve "katılımcı mizah" alt ölçek puanlarıyla pozitif yönde ilişkilidir.**Sonuç:** Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin empati düzeyleri (bilişsel ve duygusal empati) ve mizah tarzları (kendini geliştirici, kendini yıkıcı, katılımcı ve saldırgan) çocuklara duydukları sevgiyi etkilemektedir. Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin empati düzeylerini ve mizah tarzlarını belirlemek pediatrik hemşirelik uygulamalarını daha iyi hale getirmek için büyük önem taşımaktadır.**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mizah, çocuk, sevgi, hemşirelik öğrencileri.

1. Introduction

Love and affection help children develop a basic sense of trust and healthy personality traits (1). Health professionals, especially pediatric nurses, are responsible for showing love and affection towards hospitalized children, who may feel unloved during that period (2). Nurses' affection towards children depend on numerous factors: (1) childcare status, (2) empathic tendency levels, (3) marital status, (4) how many children they care a day, (5) where they work, and (6) whether they like playing with children, (7) like to work in pediatric units, (8) have children, and (9) have siblings. Empathy affects nurses' affection towards children (7). Empathy is defined as one's ability to put oneself in someone else's shoes to better understand what they feel or think (8). Some patients convey nonverbal messages to express their discomfort. Therefore, nurses with empathy are likely to better understand and communicate with their patients (9). It is difficult for hospitalized children to express their feelings and thoughts. Every hospitalized child has unique experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (1). Healthcare professionals who can empathize with their patients can help them experience less stress, anxiety, and depression (10, 11). Being understood by nurses makes hospitalized children feel like they are cared about and valued. They also trust the care provided by those nurses. However, there is no published research investigating the relationship between empathy and affection in nursing students. Therefore, this paper addressed the relationship between nursing students' basic empathy levels and affection towards children.

Pediatric nurses are expected to love children (1), and those with a good sense of humor can communicate better with them and show more affection towards them (12). Humor is a way of avoiding negative feelings while keeping one's feet on the ground (13). Bringing humor to someone's life is satisfying. For children, reducing stress through humor is a sign of love. Humor is also a strategy used by nurses to cope with anxiety, stress, and insecurity. Beck (1997) (14) states that nurses who use humor can better cope with difficult situations. Astedt and Isola (2001) also note that nurses who use humor as a therapeutic tool help their patients experience less stress (15). Humor helps develop a sense of trust between nurses and patients (12). Besides, nurses who use humor effectively interact better with patients (16). Humor is an essential part of pediatric nursing care. Therefore, nurses should use it to grow affection towards hospitalized children. However, there is no published research examining the relationship between humor and affection in nursing students. Therefore, this paper also looked into the effect of humor on affection in nursing students. Figure 1 shows the hypothetical model.

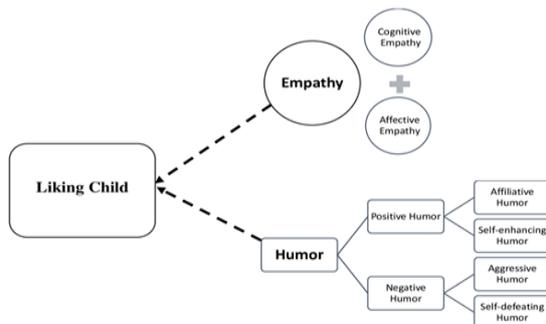


Figure 1: Hypothetical Model

1.1. Research Questions

This study sought answers to the following questions:

1. a.) What level of affection do nursing students have towards children?
 - b.) What level of basic empathy do nursing students have?
 - c.) Which type of humor nursing students use?
2. What is the relationship between basic empathy and affection towards children in nursing students?
 3. What is the relationship between humor and affection towards children in nursing students?

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This was a descriptive and correlational study.

2.2. Sample

The study population consisted of 115 third-year nursing students. The sample consisted of 112 third-year nursing students who took the Child Health and Disease Nursing course in the 2019-2020 academic year. Participation was voluntary. There were no exclusion criteria. No sampling was performed because the goal was to include as many students in the sample as possible. The participation rate was 98.2%.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected online (Google Forms) by the researcher using a descriptive information form, the Barnett Liking of Children Scale, the Basic Empathy Scale, and the Humor Styles Questionnaire. The data were collected between 2019-2020 academic year summer term.

2.4. Data Collection Tools

2.4.1. Descriptive Information Form

The descriptive information form was based on a literature review conducted by the researcher (4,5,15). It consisted of 12 closed-ended questions on sociodemographic (age, gender, sibling, childcare status) and affective characteristics (communicating with children, spending time with children, approaching sick children, the effect of pediatrics on affection, wanting to be a pediatric nurse).

2.4.2. Barnett Liking of Children Scale

The Barnett Liking of Children Scale (BLOCS) was developed by Barnett and Sinsi (1990) to evaluate individuals' affection towards children (17). It was adapted to Turkish by Duyan and Gelbal (18). It consists of 14 items scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The total score ranges from 14 to 98. Higher scores indicate greater affection towards children. BLOCS had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94 in this study.

2.4.3. Basic Empathy Scale

The Basic Empathy Scale (BES) was developed by Jolliffe and Farrington (2006) (19) to assess both cognitive and affective empathy.

For BES, cognitive empathy is different from perspective-taking, while affective empathy is different from sympathy (19).

Therefore, it allowed us to evaluate the relationship between affection towards children and empathy more objectively.

The Basic Empathy Scale was adapted to Turkish by Topçu et al. (2010) (20). The scale consists of 20 items and two subscales: cognitive empathy (nine items) and affective empathy (eleven items). The items are scored on a five-point Likert-type scale. The total score ranges from 52 to 88. The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 in this study.

2.4.4 Humor Styles Questionnaire

The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was developed by Martin et al. (21) and adapted to Turkish by Yerlikaya (22). The scale consists of four subscales (self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, self-defeating humor, and aggressive humor) under two main headings (harmonious/positive humor and incompatible/negative humor). Higher scores in a subscale indicate that one uses that kind of humor more often. The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 in this study.

Table 1. Mean Scale Scores (n=113)

Scales	$\bar{X} \pm Sd$	Min-Max	
BLOCS Total Score	83.44±13.72	33-98	
BES Total Score	71.59±5.95	52-88	
Affective empathy	29.60±3.04	18-37	
Cognitive empathy	41.99±4.95	29-55	
HSQ Total Score	121.16±20.33	73-174	
Harmonious/ Positive Humor	Affiliative humor	42.11±7.44	Harmonious/ Positive Humor
	Self-enhancing humor	35.05±8.86	
Incompatible/ Negative Humor	Aggressive humor	18.89±7.01	Incompatible/ Negative Humor
	Self-defeating humor	25.09±8.18	

2.5. Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS, Inc.; Chicago, IL, USA, version 23) at a significance level of 0.05. The descriptive data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. The statistical data were analyzed using independent sample t-test, ANOVA, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis test, and Correlation test.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Gümüşhane University Scientific Research and Publication Ethic Committee (approval no:26753 date:08/07/2020). All nursing students were informed of the research purpose, procedure, and confidentiality before participation. Permission was obtained from the developers of the scales. All stages of the research adhered to ethical principles.

3. Results

Table 2 shows the distribution of BLOCS scores by sociodemographic characteristics. Participants who loved children, enjoyed spending time with them, were comfortable being around them, and would like to work in pediatric clinics had higher BLOCS scores ($p < 0.01$). Female participants had a higher mean BLOCS score than their male counterparts ($p < 0.05$). Participants who had to take care of children had a higher mean BLOCS score than those who did not ($p < 0.05$). Participants who could communicate with children had a higher mean BLOCS score than those who could not ($p < 0.05$). Age and the number of siblings had no significant effect on BLOCS scores ($p > 0.05$). (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the distribution of BES scores by sociodemographic characteristics. Participants 20-22 years of age had a higher mean BES "affective empathy" subscale score than those 23-24 years of age ($p < 0.01$). Female participants had a higher mean BES "affective empathy" subscale score than their male counterparts ($p < 0.01$). Participants who had to take care of children had higher BES total and "affective empathy" subscale scores than those who did not ($p < 0.05$). Participants who enjoyed spending time with children had a higher mean BES "affective empathy" subscale score than those who did not ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 4 shows the distribution of HSQ total and subscale scores by sociodemographic characteristics. Male participants had a higher mean HSQ "aggressive humor" subscale score than their female counterparts ($p < 0.05$). Participants who had siblings had higher HSQ total and "self-improving humor" subscale scores than those who did not ($p < 0.05$). Participants who did not have to take care of children had a higher HSQ "aggressive humor" subscale score than those who did ($p < 0.05$). Participants who were uncomfortable being around children had a higher mean HSQ "self-defeating humor" subscale score than those who were not ($p < 0.05$) (Table 4). Participants who had difficulty approaching sick children had a higher mean HSQ "self-defeating humor" subscale score than those who did not ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5 shows the correlation between scale scores. There was a moderate and positive correlation between BES and BLOCS total scores ($p < 0.01$). BLOCS total score was positively correlated with BES "affective empathy" subscale score ($r = 0.212$, $p < 0.05$). BLOCS total score was positively correlated with HSQ "self-enhancing humor" ($r = 0.230$, $p < 0.05$) and "affiliative humor" subscale scores ($r = 0.301$, $p < 0.01$). BLOCS total score was negatively correlated with HSQ "aggressive humor" subscale score ($r = -0.358$, $p < 0.01$) (Table 5) (Figures 2 and 3).

4. Discussion

Nursing involves affection, communication, empathy, and humor (10, 12, 23). This study investigated the relationship between empathy, humor, and affection in nursing students. The results showed a positive correlation between BLOCS total score and BES "affective empathy" and HSQ "self-enhancing humor" and "affiliative humor" subscale scores.

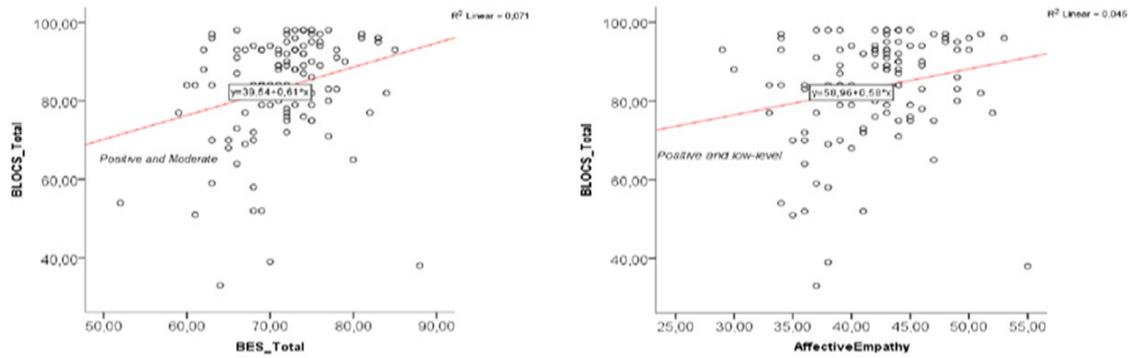


Figure 2: Correlation between BLOCS and BES total/affective empathy

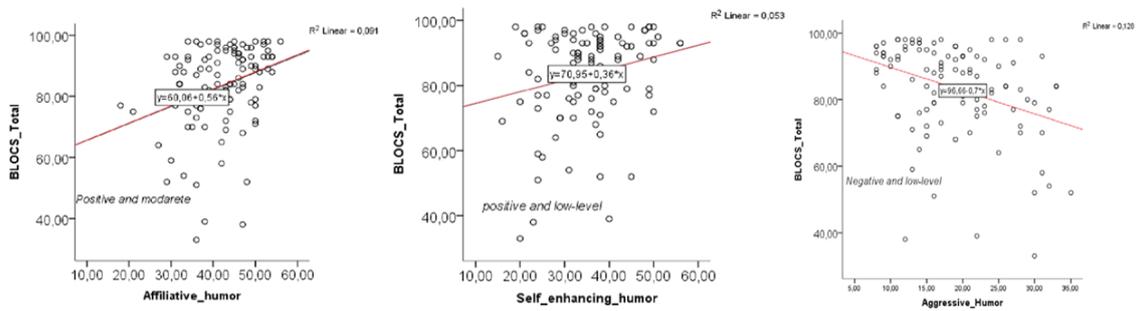


Figure 3: Correlation between BLOCS and affiliative, self-enhancing, and aggressive humor styles

Love is vital for children. The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child also emphasizes it by stating that "... the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up... in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding" (24). Our participants found to have high levels of affection. Akgun Kostak et al. (2017) (5), Bektaş et al. (2015) (4), Büyük et al. (2014) (25), Erdem and Duyan (2011) (23) reported similarly. Female participants had higher BLOCS scores than their male counterparts. Participants who had to take care of children had higher BLOCS scores than those who did not. Participants who loved children had higher BLOCS scores than those who did not. Participants who would like to work in pediatric clinics had higher BLOCS scores than those who would not ($p < 0.05$). Aytekin (2019) (26) and Baran and Yılmaz (2019) (27) also found that female nursing students had higher BLOCS scores than their male counterparts. Research shows that nurses' BLOCS scores are affected by how many children they care for a day and how much they want to care for children (4, 27, 29). Pediatric healthcare workers are expected to be more self-sacrificing and affectionate than other healthcare workers. Pediatric patients may have difficulty communicating. Therefore, pediatric nurses should love children and know how to communicate with them (25, 29-31). Nursing students who could communicate with children had higher BLOCS scores than those who could not. Participants who enjoyed spending time with children had higher BLOCS scores than those who did not. Nursing students who were comfortable being around children had higher BLOCS scores than those who were not. Bektaş et al. (2015) (4) and Büyük, Rızalar, Gudek, and Oguzhan (2014) (25) also found that nurses and nursing students who enjoyed

playing games with children and were happy to be around them had higher BLOCS scores. The more time nurses spend time with children, the greater the bond they form with them, and the more affection they show towards them (1). Nurses should know how to communicate with children to be able to determine and meet their pediatric patients' needs.

Nurses should use be able to empathize and communicate with children and show love and attention to them. Empathy is an important factor affecting behavior (11). The ability to empathize is one of the critical nursing competencies. Nurses with empathy skills are better at understanding patients and determining their needs (12). Empathy is even more important for nurses to understand patients, especially pediatric patients, who have difficulty expressing themselves verbally (1). We found a moderate and positive correlation between BLOCS and BES scores. Kostak, Semerci, and Kocaaslan (2017) (5) and Durmuşoğlu and Erbay (2013) (32) also reported that the more affectionate the teachers were towards children, the more they could empathize with them. Participants 20-22 years of age had higher BES "affective empathy" subscale scores than those 23-24 years of age ($p < 0.05$). Khademalhosseini et al. (2014) (33) also detected a positive correlation between age and empathy skills in medical students. Nursing students are the healthcare professionals of the future who are supposed to provide quality care. Therefore, it is worrying that our participants had low affective empathy levels. Our female participants had higher BES "affective empathy" subscale scores than their male counterparts, which was also reported by Khademalhosseini, Khademalhosseini, and Mahmoodian (2014).

However, gender may not have an impact on empathy because the difference in affective empathy between male and female participants may be due to sociocultural factors. Another interesting result was that participants who had to care for children had higher affective and basic empathy levels than those who did not ($p<0.05$). Bektaş et al. (2015) (4) also found that nursing students who had taken care of children before were more affectionate towards children than those who had not. Therefore, we can conclude that nursing students who take, or have taken, care of children show more affection towards children and have higher affective and basic empathy levels.

Hospitalized children need more affection and attention (25) because hospitalization is a traumatic experience for them.

Nurses using humor can develop a sense of trust with patients and help them cope with their conditions (20, 21). Research shows that nurses generally use positive humor more than negative humor (34). For example, they use self-enhancing humor to cope with negative emotions. We found a positive correlation between affection (BLOCS) and positive styles of humor (HSQ self-enhancing and affiliative humor). We also detected a negative correlation between affection and aggressive humor, which is associated with impaired interpersonal communication, anger, and aggressive attitudes (35). Our male participants used aggressive humor more frequently than their female counterparts ($p<0.05$), which has also been reported by Martin, Puhlik, Larsen, Gray, and Weir (2003).

Table 2. Distribution of BLOCS Scores by Sociodemographic Characteristics (n=113)

Variables	n(%)	BLOCS Total (X±Ss)	Tested	p
Age (years)				
20-22	94 (%83.9)	83.35±13.97	-0.167	0.867
23-24	18 (%16.1)	83.94±12.72		
Gender				
Female	71 (%63.4)	85.77±12.45	2.413	0.017*
Male	41 (%36.6)	79.41±15.00		
Having siblings				
Yes	104 (%92.9)	83.61±13.83	-0.758	0.449**
No	8 (%7.1)	81.25±12.82		
Childcare status				
Yes	52 (%46.4)	86.86±13.35	2.512	0.013*
No	60 (%53.6)	80.48±13.45		
Loving children				
Yes	104 (%92.9)	85.75±10.58	-4.377	0.001**
No	8 (%7.1)	53.50±15.35		
Difficulty communicating with children				
Yes	9 (%8.0)	64.33±18.78	-3.365	0.001**
No	103 (%92.0)	85.11±11.92		
Enjoying spending time with children				
Yes	96 (%85.7)	87.07±9.49	-5.623	0.001**
No	16 (%14.3)	61.68±15.31		
Being uncomfortable around children				
Yes	12 (%10.7)	63.33±19.54	-4.017	0.001**
No	100 (%89.3)	85.86±10.67		
Difficulty approaching sick children				
Yes	42 (%37.5)	77.97±15.11	-3.421	0.001*
No	70 (%62.5)	86.72±11.75		
Difference between showing affection towards sick and healthy children				
Yes	37 (%33.0)	81.62±16.68	-0.886	0.379*
No	75 (%67.0)	84.34±12.02		
Effect of pediatrics course on approach to children				
Yes	93 (%83.0)	84.52±12.71	1.863	0.065*
No	19 (%17.0)	78.15±17.31		
Willingness to work in pediatric clinics				
Yes	66 (%58.9)	87.98±9.25	4.548	0.001*
No	46 (%41.1)	76.93±16.35		

Note. *: Independent Samples T-Test, **: Mann Whitney-U, $p>0.05$, $p<0.01$

Table 3. Distribution of BES Scores by Sociodemographic Characteristics (n=113)

Variables	n(%)	Cognitive Empathy (X±Ss)	Affective Empathy (X±Ss)	BES Total (X±Ss)
Age (years)				
20-22	94 (%83.9)	29.39±2.88	42.60±4.60	72.00±6.09
23-24	18 (%16.1)	30.72±3.62	38.77±5.29	69.50±4.93
Test(t)**/p		0.172/0.090	3.100/0.002	0.652/0.103
Gender				
Female	71 (%63.4)	29.70±2.94	43.50±4.83	73.21±5.61
Male	41 (%36.6)	29.43±3.22	39.36±4.09	68.80±5.42
Test(t)**/p		0.443/0.659	4.606/0.000	4.023/0.000
Having siblings				
Yes	104 (%92.9)	29.49±3.06	41.80±4.96	71.29±5.85
No	8 (%7.1)	31.12±2.35	44.37±4.95	75.50±6.18
Test(t)**/p		-1.591/.112	-1.553/.120	-1.704/0.088
Childcare status				
Evet	52 (%46.4)	29.84±3.10	43.11±5.09	72.96±5.79
Hayır	60 (%53.6)	29.40±2.99	41.01±4.71	70.40±5.88
Test(t)**/p		.863/.441	2.264/0.026	2.299/.023
Loving children				
Yes	104 (92.9)	29.57±3.06	42.02±4.88	71.58±5.78
No	8 (7.1)	30.25±3.45	41.50±6.50	71.75±8.39
Test(t)**/p		-0.858/0.391	-0.895/0.371	-0.594/0.552
Difficulty communicating with children				
Yes	9 (%8.0)	30.33±3.04	44.44±6.82	74.77±8.65
No	103 (%92.0)	29.54±3.04	41.77±4.77	71.32±5.63
Test(t)**/p		-0.564/0.573	-0.821/0.411	-0.896/0.370
Enjoying spending time with children				
Yes	96 (%85.7)	29.55±3.13	42.21±4.82	71.77±5.79
No	16 (%14.3)	29.93±2.46	40.62±5.84	70.56±6.92
Test(t)**/p		-0.750/0.453	-1.985/0.047	-1.729/0.084
Being uncomfortable around children				
Yes	12 (%10.7)	29.58±2.81	41.66±5.59	71.25±7.07
No	100 (%89.3)	29.61±3.08	42.03±4.93	71.64±5.84
Test(t)**/p		-0.110/0.913	-0.798/0.425	-0.716/0.474
Difficulty approaching sick children				
Yes	42 (%37.5)	29.50±2.95	42.33±4.57	71.83±5.85
No	70 (%62.5)	29.67±3.11	41.78±5.23	71.45±6.04
Test(t)**/p		-0.288/0.774	0.561/0.576	0.322/0.748
Difference between showing affection towards sick and healthy children				
Yes	37 (%33.0)	29.18±2.71	42.56±5.13	71.35±6.13
No	75 (%67.0)	29.81±3.18	41.70±4.91	71.52±5.90
Test(t)**/p		-1.022/0.309	0.859/0.392	0.197/0.844
Effect of pediatrics course on approach to children				
Yes	93 (%83.0)	29.58±3.12	41.88±4.98	71.46±6.01
No	19 (%17.0)	29.73±2.66	42.52±5.10	72.46±5.74
Test(t)**/p		-0.203/0.839	-0.512/0.610	-0.532/0.595
Willingness to work in pediatric clinics				
Yes	66 (%58.9)	29.60±3.06	41.63±4.95	71.24±5.83
No	46 (%41.1)	29.60±3.04	42.50±5.04	72.10±6.15
Test(t)**/p		-0.004/0.996	-0.901/0.369	-0.756/0.451

Note. *: Independent Samples T-Test, **: Mann Whitney-U, p>0.05, p<0.01

Table 4. Distribution of HSQ Scores by Sociodemographic Characteristics (n=113)

Variables	n(%)	Harmonious / Positive Humor		Incompatible / Negative Humor		HSQ Total (X±Ss)
		Affiliative Humor (X±Ss)	Self-enhancing Humor (X±Ss)	Aggressive Humor (X±Ss)	Self-defeating Humor (X±Ss)	
Age (years)						
20-22	94 (%83.9)	42.05±7.13	34.98±8.43	18.48±6.91	25.04±7.85	120.57±18.84
23-24	18 (%16.1)	42.44±9.12	35.38±11.10	21.00±7.38	25.38±9.97	124.22±27.29
Test(t)*/p		-0.203/0.839	-0.174/0.862	-1.396/0.165	-0.164/0.870	-0.696/0.488
Gender						
Female	71 (%63.4)	42.39±7.58	34.98±9.13	17.21±6.41	24.15±8.37	118.74±20.56
Male	41 (%36.6)	41.63±7.25	35.17±8.46	21.80±7.14	26.73±7.67	125.34±19.46
Test(t)*/p		0.519/0.605	-0.106/0.916	-3.502/0.001	-1.616/0.109	-1.667/0.980
Having siblings						
Yes	104 (%92.9)	42.48±7.29	35.69±8.61	19.10±6.92	25.40±8.09	122.68±19.61
No	8 (%7.1)	37.37±8.26	26.75±8.31	16.12±8.06	21.12±8.85	101.37±20.38
Test(t)**/p		-1.697/0.090	-2.545/0.011	-1.222/0.222	-1.097/0.273	-2.363/0.018
Childcare status						
Evet	52 (%46.4)	43.17±7.78	36.19±9.33	17.07±6.03	24.46±8.92	120.90±21.32
Hayır	60 (%53.6)	41.20±7.07	34.06±8.38	20.46±7.46	25.65±7.51	121.38±19.60
Test(t)*/p		1.405/0.163	1.270/0.207	-2.616/0.010	-0.756/0.452	-0.124/0.902
Loving children						
Yes	104 (%92.9)	42.23±7.47	35.29±8.83	18.61±6.87	24.75±8.09	120.89±20.37
No	8 (%7.1)	40.62±7.26	31.87±9.12	22.50±8.34	29.62±8.53	124.42±20.75
Test(t)**/p		-0.616/0.538	-0.928/0.354	-1.267/0.205	-1.465/0.143	-0.616/0.538
Difficulty communicating with children						
Yes	9 (%8.0)	38.44±10.71	30.11±10.01	21.77±7.13	27.55±10.82	117.88±28.89
No	103 (%92.0)	42.43±7.06	35.48±8.67	18.64±6.98	24.88±7.94	121.44±19.58
Test(t)**/p		-0.948/0.343	-1.415/0.157	-1.238/0.216	-0.605/0.545	-0.348/0.728
Enjoying spending time with children						
Yes	96 (%85.7)	42.53±7.20	35.62±8.68	18.28±6.74	24.72±8.12	121.16±20.55
No	16 (%14.3)	39.62±8.54	31.62±9.42	22.56±7.71	27.31±8.49	121.12±19.59
Test(t)**/p		-1.132/0.258	-1.545/0.122	-1.960/0.050	-0.920/0.358	-0.162/0.871
Being uncomfortable around children						
Yes	12 (%10.7)	42.08±6.66	32.83±10.27	20.08±7.08	30.41±7.54	125.41±21.27
No	100 (%89.3)	42.12±7.56	35.32±8.69	18.75±7.03	24.46±8.05	120.65±20.26
Test(t)**/p		-0.066/0.947	-1.008/0.313	-0.527/0.598	-2.274/0.023	-0.984/0.325
Difficulty approaching sick children						
Yes	42 (%37.5)	41.78±7.46	34.61±8.95	19.54±7.17	27.16±8.57	123.11±20.86
No	70 (%62.5)	42.31±7.47	35.31±8.85	18.50±6.94	23.85±7.73	119.98±20.00
Test(t)*/p		-0.362/0.718	-0.400/0.690	0.763/0.447	2.103/0.038	0.788/0.432
Difference between showing affection towards sick and healthy children						
Yes	37 (%33.0)	42.27±7.67	35.43±9.37	18.78±6.59	25.81±7.99	122.29±20.01
No	75 (%67.0)	42.04±7.37	34.86±8.65	18.94±7.25	24.74±8.30	120.60±20.59
Test(t)*/p		0.153/0.878	0.317/0.752	-0.115/0.909	0.645/0.520	0.414/0.680
Effect of pediatrics course on approach to children						
Yes	93 (%83.0)	42.02±7.35	35.13±9.00	19.10±7.22	25.35±8.33	121.62±20.81
No	19 (%17.0)	42.57±8.05	34.63±8.33	17.84±5.96	23.84±7.47	118.89±18.11
Test(t)*/p		-0.296/0.768	0.227/0.821	0.715/0.476	0.732/0.465	0.531/0.596
Willingness to work in pediatric clinics						
Yes	66 (%58.9)	42.18±7.12	35.33±9.01	18.12±6.78	24.03±8.08	119.66±20.55
No	46 (%41.1)	42.02±7.95	34.65±8.71	20.00±7.26	26.63±8.17	123.30±20.04
Test (t)*/p		0.111/0.911	0.399/0.691	-1.400/0.164	-1.667/0.098	-0.931/0.354

Note. *: Independent Samples T-Test, **: Mann Whitney-U, p>0.05, p<0.01

Table 5. Correlation between Scale Scores (n=113)

	BLOCS Total	
	r	p
Basic Empathy Scale Total	0.266	0.005**
Cognitive Empathy	0.174	0.067
Affective Empathy	0.212	0.025*
Humor Styles Questionnaire Total	0.017	0.859
Affiliative Humor	0.301	0.001**
Self-Enhancing Humor	0.230	0.015*
Aggressive Humor	-0.358	0.000**
Self-Defeating Humor	-0.174	0.066

5. Strengths and Limitations

This is the first study to investigate the relationship between affection, empathy, and humor in nursing students. We think that our results will contribute to the literature and pave the way for further research. The study had one limitation. The sample consisted only of nursing students, and therefore, the results cannot be generalized. Future studies should recruit larger sample groups.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper was examined the relationship between affection, empathy, and humor in nursing students. Nursing students show high levels of affection towards children. Those who can empathize with children and use humor are more affectionate towards children. Therefore, nursing curricula should provide training on empathy and humor to help students acquire those skill sets. Affection, empathy, and humor depend on sociodemographic characteristics. Future studies should recruit larger sample groups with different sociodemographic backgrounds to better understand the mechanisms underlying the relationship. More qualitative research is warranted to explain and contextualize these findings.

Based on the results, we can conclude that nurses should empathize with pediatric patients and use humor to show more affection towards them. Determining the relationship between affection, empathy, and humor in nursing students can help researchers and policymakers elevate the standards of pediatric nursing practice.

7. Contribution to the Field

This is the first study to look into the relationship between affection, empathy, and humor in nursing students. Therefore, we think that the results will contribute to the literature and guide nursing students considering pursuing careers in pediatric nursing.

Conflict of Interest

This article did not receive any financial fund. There is no conflict of interest regarding any person and / or institution.

Authorship Contribution

Concept: VAC, UG, BA; **Design:** VAC, UG; **Supervision:** VAC, UG, BA; **Funding:** VAC; **Materials:** VAC; **Data Collection/Processing:** VAC, UG, BA; **Analysis /Interpretation:** VAC, UG; **Literature Review:** VAC, UG, BA; **Manuscript Writing:** VAC, UG, BA; **Critical Review:** VAC, UG, BA.

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