

Empathy Based on Gender in Dissertations Submitted in Turkey: A Meta-Analysis Study

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Today, where the relationships among people have increased and concentrated, maintaining powerful communication channels with the individual(s) is significant for conducting healthy and sustainable relationships with others. Social roles assigned to gender and physiological differences determine the understanding of individuals of the emotions and thoughts of their counterparts. Empathy is among the precursor factors in the initiation and maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships; reduction of conflicts and resolution of problems; and gratification in relationships. Thus, a study to review the dissertations on empathy and investigate the variances on gender is of utmost importance to clarify the differences between the empathic behaviors of males and females.

Purpose of Study: This meta-study aimed to use the data collected from the dissertations submitted in Turkey to answer the following research questions on empathy: "Does empathy differ based on gender?"; "Do the levels of education of the students affect the differentiation of empathic tendencies based on gender?"; and "What is the difference between empathic tendencies based on gender in the dissertations submitted before 2009 and in 2010 and later?"

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Method: A meta-analysis method was used in the study. The widely accepted purpose of a meta-analysis is to reach the most accurate results by combining the findings from numerous independent studies on a subject. The main data sources of the study are the dissertations and masters' theses on empathy submitted in Turkish universities. The studies scanned in the study were conducted between 2005 and 2014, of which 87.67% (f=64) were masters' theses and 12.33% (f=9) were dissertations. The Board of Higher Education (YÖK) Thesis Survey database was used for the thesis survey by using keywords "empathy" and "empathic" (both in Turkish and in English). The search revealed that certain theses on empathy, which could be included in the meta-analysis, were not available in the system or had limited availability. To access these studies, their authors or advisors were reached by e-mail. Finally, 73 studies out of the 218 obtained were included in the meta-analysis.

Findings and Results: As a result of the combination process conducted within the random effects model, a positive and statistically significant effect size was observed favoring the females by 0.31 [0.25 - 0.38].

Recommendations: This study was limited to the theses submitted in Turkey; further studies could be conducted to include all research conducted on empathy. This study scrutinized only the gender variable; further studies could use different variables. Future studies would be more appropriate if different variables were used.

Keywords: Empathy, empathic tendency, gender, meta-analysis, moderator.

Introduction

Today, where the relationships among people have increased and concentrated, maintaining powerful communication channels with the individual(s) is significant for conducting healthy and sustainable relationships with others. Social roles assigned to gender and physiological differences determine the understanding of individuals of the emotions and thoughts of their counterparts (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Hoffman, 1977; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Empathy is among the precursor factors in the initiation and maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships; reduction of conflicts and resolution of problems; and gratification in relationships (Dökmen, 2010). Thus, a study to review the dissertations on empathy and investigate the variances on gender is of utmost importance to clarify the differences between the empathic behavior of males and females.

Empathy has been scrutinized several times since the end of the 19th century, and scholars have defined it in different ways (Panksepp & Lahvis, 2011). Rogers (1975) even stated that he defined empathy in different ways. During the initial years of study, scholars emphasized the emotional aspects of the notion of empathy; in later years, however, that approach changed. It was eventually determined that empathy

should not be considered only in a single-dimensional way, but studies should consider both the emotional and cognitive aspects of empathy (Achim, Ouellet, Roy, & Jackson, 2010; Davis, 1983; Grynberg & Pollatos, 2015; Hinnant & O'Brien, 2007; Vossen, Piotrowski & Valkenburg, 2015). Empathy is conceptualized as the skill of comprehending the emotions and perspectives of others (Grynberg and Pollatos, 2015) and "the power to comprehend things alien to us" (Farrow & Woodruff, 2007). It was defined by Rogers as a process in which an individual puts himself or herself in the place of another individual; looking at the events from that person's point of view; correctly understanding and feeling that individual's emotions and thoughts; and communicating those to that person (Dökmen, 2010). Empathy is a special form of knowing, understanding, and feeling the experiences of others (Smith, 1989). In short, empathy is the correct understanding of an individual of the emotions and thoughts of another by putting himself or herself in that person's shoes (Dökmen, 2010).

Empathy is especially affected by previously experienced negative events or emotions (Baldner, Longo, & Scott, 2015). It is influenced by positive or negative experiences. Thus, Barnett and McCoy (1989) concluded that individuals who had intense undesirable experiences in childhood had lower empathic skills than others. However, Rogers (1975) stated that empathic tendencies are changeable and could be developed through education. Thus, spending more time with people, getting to know them better, establishing closer relationships, and becoming a better observer contribute in developing empathic skills (Kolko, 2014; Smith, 1989).

Through empathy, individuals can have the opportunity to understand the emotions of others and communicate that to them (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015). Thus, empathic individuals have an opportunity to conduct a more healthy and terminal communications with others in both social environments and in daily life (Achim, Ouellet, Roy, & Jackson, 2010; Fan, Duncan, de Greck, & Northoff, 2011). Furthermore, empathy helps decrease violence against others and solve problems that individuals encounter (Kolko, 2014; Van Langen, Wissink, Van Vugt, Van der Stouwe, & Stams, 2014). Hence, studies have demonstrated that individuals with higher empathic tendencies had higher problem-solving skills, and subsequently better interpersonal relationships (De Wied, Branje, & Meeus, 2007). Studies have identified a negative relationship between empathy and violence (Bryant, 1982; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007; Mehrabian, Young, & Sato, 1988; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988), bullying (Endresen & Olweus, 2001; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008), cyber-bullying (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015), power (Silfver, Helkama, Lönnqvist, & Verkasalo, 2008), depression (Trumpeter, Watson, O'Leary, & Weathington, 2008), and antisocial behavior (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988); and a positive relationship was identified between empathy and spiritual behavior (Huber & MacDonald, 2012), philanthropy (Silfver, Helkama, Lönnqvist, & Verkasalo, 2008) and self-respect (Trumpeter, Watson, O'Leary, & Weathington, 2008).

Although there are several qualitative and quantitative studies on empathy in the literature, there were also meta-analysis studies. Among these, a meta-analysis study

by Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias (2015) that surveyed articles published in English between 1970 and 2012 determined that gender was decisive on empathic tendency levels and that both the cognitive and emotional empathic tendency levels of males were lower than females. That study also found that cognitive empathy differed based on age, while emotional empathy did not. A different meta-analysis study investigated the variations in the empathic tendencies of university students in the U.S.A. within a time period. That study concluded that, between the years of 1979 and 2009, empathic tendencies of students decreased sharply (Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011). Dissertations submitted in Turkey demonstrate different results on research on empathy based on the basic variable of gender. Certain studies showed that the empathic tendency level of males was different than that of females (Yılmaz, 2013), while female empathic tendency levels were found to be higher than males in other studies (Akar, 2014; Derman, 2011; Rehber, 2007); yet other studies found no differences between the empathic tendency levels based on gender (Alper, 2007; Tekmen, 2010; Yavaş, 2007; Yiğiter, 2008). These ambiguous results have motivated researchers to further investigate the area and several studies were conducted to clarify the effects of the gender variable. Meta-analytic studies intrinsically present a holistic approach opportunity for a specific topic using tables and graphs in one study, which consists of many included studies on differing samples by many researchers (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2013). In this context, this study may contribute to the field by guiding future researchers on the topic by providing a synthesis in terms of gender differences in empathy. Within the literature, gender is an indispensable variable in empathy research for both qualitative and quantitative studies. Considering this reality, the disambiguation of gender differences is a valuable contribution to the field. Thus, the objective of this meta-analysis is to examine the gender variable from a broader perspective, to clarify the subject matter, compliment the literature, and guide future scholars in their research. This meta-study aims to use the data collected from dissertations submitted in Turkey to answer the following questions on empathy: "Does empathy differ based on gender?"; "Do the levels of education of the students affect the differentiation of empathic tendencies based on gender?"; and "What is the difference between empathic tendencies based on gender in the dissertations submitted before 2009 and in 2010 and later?"

Method

Research Model

A meta-analysis method was used in the study. The widely accepted purpose of a meta-analysis is to reach the most correct results by combining the findings from numerous independent studies on a subject (Cumming, 2012; Dinçer, 2013; Ellis, 2012).

Data Collection

The main data sources of the study are the dissertations and masters' theses on empathy submitted to Turkish universities. The studies scanned in the study were conducted between 2005 and 2014, of which 87.67% (f=64) were masters' theses and 12.33% (f=9) were dissertations. The Board of Higher Education (YÖK) Thesis Survey database was used for the thesis survey by using the keywords "empathy" and "empathic" (both in Turkish and in English). The search revealed that certain theses on empathy, which could be included in the meta-analysis, were not available in the system or had limited availability. To access these studies, their authors or advisors were contacted by e-mail. Finally, 73 studies out of the 218 obtained were included in the meta-analysis.

Selection Criteria

Selection criteria implemented to elect the studies for use in the study were as follows:

First Criterion: The study should be conducted between the years of 2005 and 2014.

Second Criterion: The study should be a master's thesis or a dissertation written in any language and submitted in Turkey.

Third Criterion: The study should contain gender group sample size, standard deviation, average points, t-score, F score, and X^2 values, which were necessary to calculate effect sizes required to conduct meta-analysis study.

Coding Method and Analysis of Data

After the selection of the theses on empathy, studies conforming to the selection criteria were coded in an Excel worksheet for analysis. Open, clear, and detailed coding of the studies accepted for meta-analysis is rather critical (Cumming, 2012; Ellis, 2012; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Comprehensive Meta Analysis (CMA) software was used in the study for data analysis and "Cohen d" was used for the calculation of effect size (Cohen, 1988). Since the significance level was accepted as 0.05 in the theses included in the study, the overall significance level for statistical analyses in this study was set at 0.05. Calculations were performed using both constant and random effects models. Furthermore, heterogeneity of the effect sizes was calculated using Q and I^2 statistics.

Findings

This section includes the determination of the publication bias in the research included in the study; uncombined effect size findings and the forest graph; combined findings based on constant and random effect models; and homogeneity test results and moderator analysis results.

Publication Bias

Publication bias that could emerge as a result of the high publication possibility of the studies that has bigger sample sizes or with statistically significant results could cause the overestimation of the average effect size (Borenstein et al., 2009). The Orwin Failsafe N Number; Duval and Tweedie's trim and fill method; the Egger test; and funnel plot methods were used to scrutinize the publication bias.

Table 1.

Publication Bias Test Results for the Theses Related To Empathy and Gender

Orwin's fail-safe N Studies are needed for "trivial" SMD	Duval and Tweedie's trim and fill (fixed)		Egger Test
	Studies trimme d	SMD Observed (adjusted)	
0.01 SMD for 2531	1	0.31 (0.31)	p=0.09 (2 tails)

To test publication bias, Orwin's Failsafe N calculation was initially conducted. This method calculates the possible missing number of studies in a meta-analysis (Borenstein et al., 2009). The analysis resulted in an Orwin's Failsafe N value of 2531. The number of studies required for the average effect size of 0.31 found at the end of meta-analysis to reach 0.01000 level (trivial), hence for it to reach almost zero effect level, was 2531, almost 35 times the number of theses included in the study. However, the 73 research papers included in the study were the total number of studies conducted (based on the acceptance criteria) in Turkey on the related research question. Since it was impossible to obtain access 2531 theses, this result was accepted as an indicator that no publication bias existed.

In the second process conducted to test publication bias, Duval and Tweedie tests were conducted and the results are displayed in Table 1, which demonstrates that there was no difference between the observed effect size value and the virtual effect size created to correct the effect induced by the publication bias. Lack of a difference between the previously mentioned criteria was the result of generally symmetrical distribution of the studies concentrated on both sides of the central line. Since there was only one study related to the existence of missing data on the right and the left sides of the central line, the difference between the virtual effect size and the observed effect size was zero.

The Egger test was conducted to test the publication bias as the third process and the p-value was calculated to be 0.09. A p-value higher than 0.05 in an Egger test is an indication that there is no publication bias.

The last process conducted to determine publication bias, a funnel plot, makes it possible to visually evaluate the meta-analysis data (Cooper et al., 2009) and shows the possibility of publication bias, as shown in Figure 1. The funnel plot displays the

standard error value for the study on the y-axis and the effect size on the x-axis. Studies with lower standard error values gather towards the upper end of the funnel and close to the average effect size. Studies with higher standard error values are displayed closer to the bottom of the figure since there is a bigger sample variance in the effect size prediction in the studies with a smaller sampling size (Borenstein et al., 2009). The funnel plot for the theses on empathic tendency based on gender variable is displayed in Figure 1.

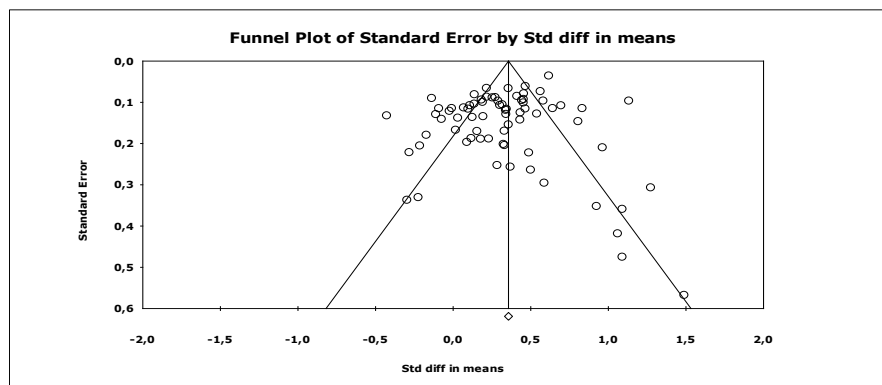


Figure 1. Funnel plot for the theses on empathic tendency based on gender variable

As shown in Figure 1, the effect sizes of the 73 theses included in the study were located on both sides of the vertical line symmetrically and very close to the combined effect size. In situations where there is no publication bias, the studies are expected to disperse on both sides of the vertical line that represents the combined effect size symmetrically (Borenstein et al., 2009). The fact that 73 studies included in the research to determine the combined effect size based on gender variable was distributed in the upper and middle regions symmetrically demonstrates that there was no publication bias (Borenstein et al., 2009). The funnel plot is the fourth indicator that there was no publication bias as far as the theses included in the study were concerned. Standardized effect sizes for the study based on the gender of participants varied between -0.43 for males and 1.49 for females. Statistically significant differences were observed in 40 studies ($p < .05$), while there was no significant difference in 33 studies. Figure 2 displays the forest graphic for the visual evaluation of effect sizes of the studies on the empathic tendency levels based on gender variable and included in the research.

Figure 2 demonstrates the total number of 73 theses included in the study and contains the data for the gender variable. It shows that in most of the studies that contained data for gender variable, the results favored females. The objective of this meta-analysis was to evaluate whether there was a difference between the empathic tendency levels for males and females. The findings are displayed in Table 2.

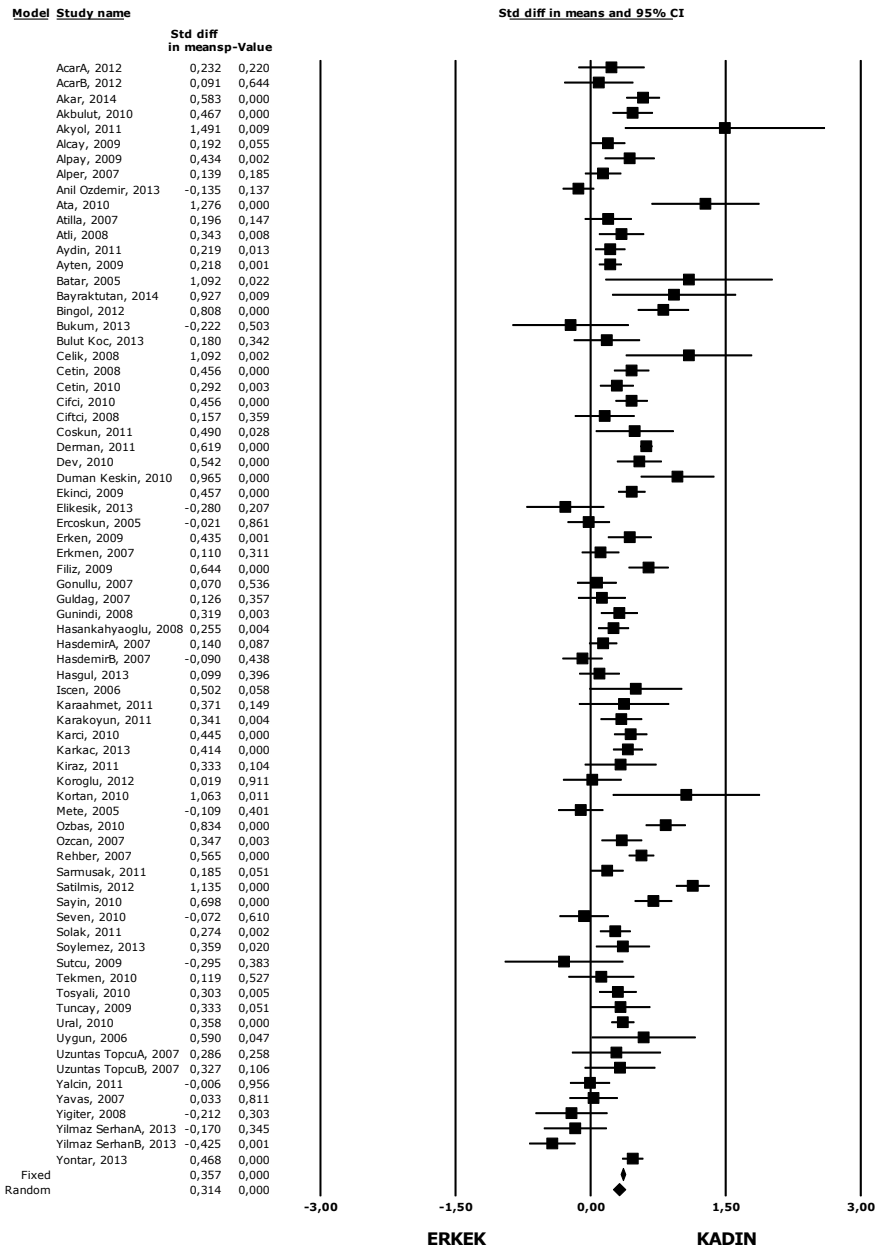


Figure 2. The forest graph demonstrating effect sizes of the studies included in the research

Table 2.*Empathy – Gender Main Analysis*

	k	n	Cohen's d (Random Model ES)	p	95% CI	Q	p	I ²
Fixed			0.36		0.33; 0.38			
Random	73	26.173	0.31	0.00	0.25; 0.38	433.6747	0.000	83.40

Table 2 shows the mean effect size for males and females related to differences in empathic tendency levels combined using constant and random effects models, standard error, and inferior and superior limits based on 95% confidence interval. The mean effect size value of the theses included in the study, calculated for constant effects model was ES=0.36; the confidence interval superior limit was 0.38 and the inferior limit was 0.33; while the mean effect size value calculated for random effects model was ES=0.31, the confidence interval superior limit for the mean effect size was 0.38 and the inferior limit was calculated as 0.25.

Calculations demonstrated that, for both constant and random effects models, the empathic tendency levels were higher in females than males in the data retrieved from 73 theses included in the meta-analysis. Since the effect sizes were between 0.20 and 0.50 for both models, it was determined that they had a lower effect based on Cohen's classification (Cohen, 1988). In Lipsey's classification, since the values for both models were within the range of 0.15 - 0.45, it could be concluded that an effect size existed, albeit low. Based on the classification by Thalheimer and Cook (2002), the difference is a low level (-0.15 - 0.40) difference. Analysis results showed that there was a low-level effect size, favoring females in both constant and random effects models.

Homogeneity Test (Q and I² Statistics)

The statistical significance based on Z test was calculated as Z=22.33399. The finding was determined to have statistical significance with p=0.00. Table 4 demonstrates the homogeneity test results for effect size distribution.

Table 3.*Homogeneity Test Results for Effect Size Distribution*

Q value	df (Q)	p value	I ² value
433.6747	72	0.00	83.40

The homogeneity test, also known as Q-statistics was calculated as Q=433.6747. The finding was determined to be statistically significant with p=0.00. This result shows that the distribution was heterogeneous. I², developed as a supplement to Q-

statistics, provides more clear results on heterogeneity (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). I^2 shows the rate of total variance on effect sizes. Contrary to the Q statistics, I^2 is not affected by the number of studies. When interpreting I^2 results, 25% depicts low-level heterogeneity, 50% depicts medium heterogeneity, and 75% depicts high level of heterogeneity (Cooper et al., 2009). Since the I^2 value of 83.40% obtained for the mean effect size of 0.31 calculated using constant effects model for the gender variable displayed a high level of heterogeneity, a random effects model was considered. To determine the source of heterogeneity, moderator analyses were conducted and the findings are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4.

Moderator Analyses for Empathy – Gender

Moderator	k	d	SE	95% CI	Q_b	p	I^2
Empathy							
Level of Education	12				5,713	0.017	
Elementary	7	0.56	0.03	0.50; 0.61			79.90
Secondary	5	0.43	0.05	0.34; 0.52			73.59
Publishing Date	73				31.17	0.000	
2009 and before	32	0.26	0.02	0.22; 0.31			68.06
2010 and after	41	0.42	0.02	0.38; 0.45			86.91

Table 4 demonstrates that the mean effect size values for the seniority of the students in educational institutions they attend were calculated as 0.56 for primary school students (CI 0.50-0.61, $p < 0.05$); and 0.43 for middle school students (CI 0.34-0.52, $p < 0.05$). Inter-study variance for the educational level moderator was statistically significant ($Q_b = 0.017$, $p < 0.05$). The fact that the study was conducted with primary and middle school students changed the effect size on the differences in empathic tendency levels based on gender. Furthermore, the mean effect size values for the theses based on the years they were conducted were calculated as 0.26 for the year 2009 and before (CI 0.22-0.31, $p < 0.05$); and 0.42 for the year 2010 and later (CI 0.38-0.45, $p < 0.05$). Inter-study variance for the period moderator that the studies were conducted was statistically significant ($Q_b = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). The time that the study was changed the effect size on the differences in empathic tendency levels based on gender.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this meta-analysis study was to determine whether the empathic tendency levels differed as a function of gender. For this purpose, master's theses and dissertations submitted in Turkey between 2005 and 2014 were reviewed and those conforming to the inclusion criteria were identified. The required coding method for meta-analysis was used and finally the data was analyzed. The sample of 73 theses included in the study was formed by 26,173 individuals (12,373 males and 13,800 females). Statistically significant differences were found in 40 theses, while there was no significant difference in 33 theses. As a result of Orwin Failsafe N

Number test; Duval and Tweedie's trim and fill method; Egger test; and funnel plot methods used to identify publication bias, it was determined that there was no publication bias in the theses included in the study. Based on the classifications of Cohen (1988), Lipsey (cited by Cooper et al., 2009) and Thalheimer and Cook (2002), there was a low but statistically significant effect size favoring females as a result of the combination process in constant effects model in all three classification models. Since homogeneity tests (Q and I^2) demonstrated a high level of heterogeneity among the theses, the model was converted into a random effects model for combination process. The combination process conducted in the random effects model produced a low but statistically significant effect size favoring females based on the classifications of Cohen (1988), Lipsey (Cited by Cooper et al., 2009) and Thalheimer and Cook (2002), in all three classification category.

The consolidated results for the examination of empathic tendency levels based on gender demonstrated that the empathic tendency levels for females were higher than for males and the difference was statistically significant. The results of the meta-analysis conducted by Mitsopoulou and Giovazoliz (2015) support the findings of this study. Instead of assessing the emphatic tendency level by total empathic tendency level, Mitsopoulou and Giovazoliz (2015) scrutinized empathy with its sub-dimensions and conducted a meta-analysis by collecting adequate data on two distinct categories of emotional and cognitive dimensions. Their findings showed that females had higher empathic tendency levels than males in both cognitive and emotional empathic tendency dimensions. A significant difference favoring females was found between gender and empathy. Dokmen (2005) commented on the reason for higher female empathy levels and explains this difference using a concept called "female sensitivity". He supported the view that some creatures with low status monitor those with higher status for fear of being exposed to violence. The same situation has also been true for human beings for ages. Throughout history, the status of males has always been higher than the status of females. Thus, in order not to be exposed to violence, females have monitored the behaviors of the opposite sex and tried to estimate their probable future behaviors. Therefore, the empathic levels females may have improved. Another study explained the higher level of empathy in females by the more sensitive and emotional upbringing process of females within the family (Ekinici & Aybek, 2010). As a result of these findings, it could be proposed that further studies on empathic tendency levels could use gender as a variable. Analyses were conducted on moderator variables that could explain the differences observed in the findings of the study. It was determined that the educational levels of the sample group and the time period that the study was conducted also affected the effect size of the variations in empathic tendency levels based on gender.

Empathic tendency levels for the educational levels that the sample group attended (primary-middle school) were scrutinized as the initial moderator of the study and the differences between the empathic tendency levels of the students attending primary school and middle school were compared. Findings demonstrated that the difference between genders was statistically higher when the differences in empathic tendency levels in the primary school period was compared with the

middle school period. In other words, the difference in the empathic tendency level based on gender was higher in primary schools, benefiting the female students. This difference could be explained by the friendship relationships between male and female students within the age range of 7 to 12. Friend groups of female and male students in this age range are usually formed by their own gender; females like to spend more time with other females and males like to spend more time with male friends (Ataç, 1991). An evaluation based on social gender role perceptions would demonstrate that girls are motivated more by their environment to understand, listen to, and base their relations on the emotions of others. In this period in their lives, the friendship relations that females form include more activities to understand each others' lives and solve each others' problems. Since these activities are primarily the activities of empathy, the empathic life experiences of females at this age range are superior, and thus it could be stated that their empathic skills are more development. However, boys within the age range of 7 to 12 base their friendship relationships on sustaining their common activities like sports, fun, and games. Male students experience more rule-based relationships in fulfilling tasks that include common activities than female students do. Thus, it could be deducted that male students aged 7 to 12 experience activities that include empathic experiences less than females. However, within the influence of adolescence in the middle school period, individuals being to have increased relationships with the opposite gender (Kılıçgil, 1998). Santrock (2005) stressed that the interaction of adolescents with their peers is extremely important for them and interaction with peers is the most significant social development characteristic for adolescents. Thus, the attachment figure evolves from the parents to the peers and individuals with who a romantic encounter is experienced during adolescence (Allen & Land 1999, cited by Bayraktar, 2007; Fraley & Davis 1997). Therefore, males that develop increased relationships with females when compared to primary school stage need to understand the opposite gender to initiate and maintain healthy relationships with them in adolescence. Furthermore, they could also develop their empathic skills by taking females as role models and the differences in empathic tendency levels between genders could decrease in the middle school stage.

The theses submitted after 2009 demonstrated increased empathic tendency levels favoring females than theses submitted before 2009 on the variations in empathic levels based on gender. In other words, in theses after 2009, the empathic tendency levels of females that were already higher than males increased further, and the difference increased, favoring females even more. The fact that the difference of empathic tendency levels between males and females increased after 2009, could be explained by the increasing educational level and role of females in business life (TÜİK, 2010, 2014). Studies stressed that as the educational level of females increased, their empathic skills also increased as well (Köksal-Akyol & Sali, 2013). Thus, the empathic tendency levels of women in business, and working women in general, are higher than other women. As a result, it could be argued that the variance between the empathic tendency levels of females and males were in favor of females.

The following recommendations could be made in consideration of the findings of this study: This study was limited to the theses submitted only in Turkey, so further studies could be conducted to include all research conducted on empathy. This study scrutinized only the gender variable, so further studies could be conducted using different variables. Future studies would be more appropriate if different variables were used instead of the gender variable.

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Özet

Problem Durumu: İnsanlar arasındaki ilişkilerinin daha da hızlandığı ve yoğunlaştığı günümüzde karşımızdaki bireyle/bireylerle iletişim kanallarını güçlü tutabilmek, karşılıklı ilişkilerin sağlıklı ve sürdürülebilir olması açısından son derece önemlidir. Gerek cinsiyete yüklenen toplumsal rollerin gerekse de fizyolojik farklılıkların bireyin karşısındaki bireylerin duygu ve düşüncelerini anlamada belirleyici olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Kişilerarası ilişkilerin sağlıklı bir şekilde başlatılıp sürdürülmesi, çatışmaların azaltılması, problemlerin çözülmesi ve ilişkilerde doyumun sağlanmasında empati öncü faktörlerden bir tanesidir. Dolayısıyla Türkiye’de empati ile ilgili yapılmış tezleri gözden geçirmek ve bu kapsamda cinsiyet farklılıklarını incelemek henüz yapılmamış bir çalışma olmakla birlikte empatinin kadın ve erkek cinsiyeti açısından nasıl farklılaştığını netliğe kavuşturmak açısından son derece önemlidir. Türkiye’de yapılan tezler incelendiğinde empati ile temel araştırma değişkenlerinden olan cinsiyet konusunda farklı araştırmalarda farklı sonuçlar elde edilmiştir. Bazı araştırmalarda erkeklerin empatik eğilim düzeyi kadınların empatik eğilim düzeyinden farklı çıkarken, kimi çalışmalarda kadınların empatik eğilim düzeylerinin erkeklerin empatik eğilim düzeylerinden yüksek olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmış, bazı araştırmalarda ise cinsiyet ile empatik eğilim düzeyi arasında farklılıklar olmadığı. Cinsiyet konusundaki bu belirsizlik araştırmacılara bu değişkeni netleştirmek için motivasyon sağlamakta ve sürekli kullanılmaktadır. Bu nedenle bu meta-analiz araştırmasının cinsiyet değişkenine daha geniş perspektifle bakılarak konunun netleştirilmesine ve literatüre katkı sağlayacağı, araştırmacılara yol göstereceği düşünülmektedir

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu meta-analiz çalışmasında aşağıdaki cevabı aranan soruları cevaplandırmak için Türkiye’de yapılan empati ile ilgili tezlerden alınan veriler kullanılmıştır. “Empati, cinsiyete göre farklılaşmakta mıdır?”, “Öğrencilerin öğrenim

düzeyleri, cinsiyete göre empatik eğilimin farklılaşmasını etkilemekte midir?" ve "2009 yılı ve öncesi ile 2010 yılı ve sonrası yapılan tezlerde empatik eğilimin cinsiyete göre farklılık düzeyi nasıldır?"

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Bu çalışmada meta-analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Meta-analizde amaç, belirli bir konuda birbirinden bağımsız çok sayıda araştırmanın bulgularının birleştirilerek en doğru sonuca ulaşabilmek olarak ifade edilmektedir. Türkiye’de yapılmış olan ve empatiyi konu edinen doktora tezleri ve yüksek lisans tezleri, bu araştırmanın temel veri kaynağını oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmaya dâhil edilen çalışmalar 2005 - 2014 yılları arasında yapılmıştır. Çalışmaların %87,67’si (f=64) yüksek lisans tezi ve %12,33’ü (f=9) doktora tezinden oluşmaktadır. Tezler için yapılan tarama yeri olarak YÖK Tez Tarama veri tabanı kullanılmış ve ilgili araştırmalara ulaşmak için tarama yapılan yerlerde "empati, empatik, empathy, emphatic" anahtar sözcükleri kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca yapılan taramalarda empati konusuna yönelik ve meta-analize dâhil edilebilir veri içerebileceği düşünülen bazı tezlerin sistemde olmadığı ya da kısıtlı olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışmalara ulaşabilmek amacıyla danışman veya yazarlarıyla elektronik posta yoluyla iletişime geçilmiştir. Sonuç itibarıyla tarama sonucu ulaşılan 218 çalışmada içerisinden 73 çalışma meta-analize dâhil edilmiştir. Empati ile yapılmış tezler toplandıktan sonra, dâhil edilme kriterlerine uyan çalışmalar meta-analiz yapabilmek amacıyla excel çalışma sayfasına kodlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, verilerin analizinde Comprehensive Meta Analysis (CMA) programı kullanılmış, etki büyüklüğünün hesaplanmasında "Cohen d" dikkate alınmıştır. Ayrıca çalışmaya dâhil edilen araştırmalarda anlamlılık düzeyi 0.05 olarak alınmasından dolayı bu çalışmada da istatistiksel analizlerin anlamlılık düzeyi olarak 0.05 belirlenmiştir. Hesaplamalar hem sabit hem de rastgele etkiler modeline göre yapılmıştır. Ayrıca etki büyüklüklerinin heterojenliği Q ve I2 istatistiği kullanılarak yapılmıştır

Araştırmanın Bulguları ve Sonuçları: Bu meta-analiz çalışmasında temel amaç empatik eğilim düzeyinin cinsiyet değişkenine göre farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığının tespit edilmesidir. Bu amaçla Türkiye’de 2005 - 2014 yılları arasında yapılan yüksek lisans ve doktora tezleri taranarak dâhil etme kriterlerine uygun olan tezler tespit edilmiş ve meta-analiz için gerekli olan kodlama yöntemi kullanılmış daha sonra verilerin analizi yapılmıştır. Araştırmaya dahil edilen 73 çalışmanın örneklemini 12.373 erkek, 13.800 kadın olmak üzere 26173 kişi oluşturmuştur. 40 tezde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklılık bulunurken 33 tezde anlamlı farklılık bulunmamıştır. Yayın yanlılığının belirlenmesi amacıyla Orwin Güvenli N Sayısı testi, Duval ve Tweedie’nin kırp doldur yöntemi, Egger testi ve yayın yanlılığının olup olmadığının belirlenmesi için oluşturulan huni saçılım grafiği olmak üzere yapılan 4 farklı yöntem ve testte de araştırmaya dâhil edilen çalışmalar açısından yayın yanlılığının olmadığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Araştırmadan elde edilen sonuca göre, kadınların empatik eğilim düzeylerinin erkeklerin empatik eğilim düzeylerinden yüksektir ve bu fark istatistiksel olarak anlamlıdır. Araştırmanın birinci moderatörü olarak, örneklemin devam ettikleri öğrenim kademelerine (ilkokul-ortaokul) göre empatik eğilim düzeyi incelenmiş ve bu kapsamda ilkökulda öğrenim gören öğrenciler ile ortaokulda öğrenim gören

öğrencilerin empatik eğilim düzeylerindeki farklılıklar karşılaştırılmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre cinsiyetlerdeki empatik eğilim düzeylerindeki farklılıkların ilkökul dönemi, ortaokul dönemiyle kıyaslandığında cinsiyetler arasındaki farkın istatistiksel olarak daha fazla olduğu belirlenmiştir. Diğer bir ifadeyle ilkökulda cinsiyet değişkeniyle empatik eğilim düzeyindeki farklılık kızlar lehine daha fazladır. Araştırmanın ikinci moderatöründe 2010 yılı ve sonrasında yapılan tezlerin, 2009 yılı ve öncesinde yapılan tezlerle kıyaslandığında; cinsiyet ile empatik eğilim düzeyleri arasındaki farklılaşmada kadınlar lehine bir artış olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Diğer bir ifadeyle 2010 yılı ve sonrasında kadınların erkeklerden yüksek olan empatik eğilim düzeylerinin daha da yükseldiği, yani farkın kadınlar lehine daha da arttığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır

Öneriler: Bu çalışma sadece Türkiye’de yapılan tezlerle sınırlı tutulmuştur, yapılacak olan diğer çalışmalarda empati ile ilgili yapılmış bütün çalışmalar dahil edilebilir. Bu çalışmada sadece cinsiyet değişkeni ele alınmıştır, diğer çalışmalarda farklı değişkenler dikkate alınabilir. Bundan sonra yapılacak olan araştırmalarda, empati ile çalışırken cinsiyet değişkeni yerine farklı değişkenlerle çalışılması daha uygun olacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Empati, empatik eğilim, cinsiyet, meta-analiz, moderatör.