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**EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL EDUCATION
TEACHERS' EMPATHIC TENDENCY LEVELS AND THEIR ATTITUDES
TOWARDS SYRIAN STUDENTS**

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Abstract: The focus of this study is to investigate the association between physical education teachers' empathetic tendencies and their attitudes toward Syrian students. The research population, which was constructed using the relational scanning methodology, consists of physical education teachers who work in public schools in Adana. The research sample consists of 386 physical education teachers, 200 male and 186 female, who were chosen using the criteria sampling approach. The "Empathetic Tendency Scale" and the "Refugee Student Attitude Scale" were used to collect data. In statistical analyses, Pearson correlation analysis and basic linear regression analysis were utilized. According to the findings, there are positive and moderately significant connections between physical education teachers' levels of empathetic inclination and refugee student attitudes and sub-dimensions. Furthermore, it was discovered that empathetic propensity levels in physical education teachers substantially influenced their views toward refugee pupils and their sub-dimensions. The empathic inclination was shown to explain 50% of the total variance in the attitude scale score towards refugee students. In this context, it was determined that physical education teachers' empathetic dispositions may influence their attitudes toward Syrian pupils. These findings highlight the need of educators to enrich their educational experiences by being sensitive to their students' emotional needs, rather than focusing exclusively on academic performance. The study may shed light on the adoption of a more aware and sensitive approach in the field of education by exposing the impact of physical education teachers' empathic tendencies on their views toward Syrian students.

Key Words: Physical education teachers, Syrian students, attitude, empathic tendency

**BEDEN EĞİTİMİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN EMPATİK EĞİLİM DÜZEYLERİ İLE
SURIYELİ ÖĞRENCİLERE YÖNELİK TUTUMLARI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN
İNCELENMESİ**

Öz: Bu araştırma, beden eğitimi öğretmenlerinin empatik eğilim düzeyleri ile Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik tutumları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. İlişkisel tarama modeli temel alınarak tasarlanan araştırmanın evrenini, Adana ilinde devlet okullarında çalışan beden eğitimi öğretmenleri oluşturmaktadır. Ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak seçilen 200 erkek ve 186 kadın toplam 386 beden eğitimi öğretmeni, araştırma örneklemini temsil etmektedir. Veriler, "Empatik Eğilim Ölçeği" ve "Mülteci Öğrenci Tutum Ölçeği" kullanılarak toplanmıştır. İstatistiksel analizlerde pearson korelasyon analizi ve basit doğrusal regresyon analizi yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, beden eğitimi öğretmenlerinin empatik eğilim düzeyleri ile mülteci öğrenci tutum ve alt boyutları arasında pozitif yönde ve orta düzeylerde anlamlı ilişkiler olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, beden eğitimi öğretmenlerinin empatik eğilim düzeylerinin mülteci öğrencilere yönelik tutum ve alt boyutlarını anlamlı bir şekilde yordadığı belirlenmiştir. Empatik eğilimin mülteci öğrencilere yönelik tutum ölçeği puanındaki toplam varyansın %50'sini açıkladığı görülmüştür. Bu bağlamda, beden eğitimi öğretmenlerinin empatik eğilimlerinin Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik tutumlarını etkileyebileceği sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu bulgular, eğitimcilerin sadece akademik başarıya odaklanmanın ötesinde, öğrencilerinin duygusal ihtiyaçlarına duyarlılık göstererek eğitim deneyimlerini zenginleştirmeleri gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, beden eğitimi öğretmenlerinin empatik eğilimlerinin Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik tutumları üzerindeki etkisini aydınlatarak, eğitim alanında daha bilinçli ve duyarlı bir yaklaşımın benimsenmesine ışık tutabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beden eğitimi öğretmenleri, Suriyeli öğrenciler, tutum, empatik eğilim

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INTRODUCTION

Education has played an essential role in the evolution of society, and educators are vital players who not only contribute to student's academic performance but also to their emotional and social growth. This critical function implies that educators are more than just information transmitters who offer learning materials to students; it also implies that they concentrate on abilities such as understanding students' needs, empathy, and adjusting to diverse learning styles (Watt et al., 2021). Teachers in the educational setting treat each student as they are, without leading their students to their own point of view or forcing their own subjective beliefs on their students. It must be honestly accepted (Murat et al., 2005). This attitude supports students' personal development while also fostering their respect for diverse perspectives and cultural diversity.

One of the largest migration movements of the 21st century has occurred from Syria and continues to this day. Moreover, the majority of those who have participated in this migration are women and children. Migration harbors uncertainty for a child, making it challenging for the child to readjust to life (Nar, 2008). Therefore, special attention is required for children and their adaptation processes (Değirmenci et al., 2021). Syrian individuals seeking refuge in Turkey are often referred to in literature and media publications using terms such as refugee, migrant and foreigner (Fansa, 2021). Temporary protection is a solution implemented by states for individuals who have arrived en masse at country borders, under the obligation of non-refoulement (GİGM, 2020). Syrian individuals seeking refuge in Turkey are evaluated within the framework of temporary protection and are able to reside in Turkey indefinitely. Students under temporary protection are students who have had to leave their homes and start a new life in a distant country, and thus require extra care when integrating into educational systems. Education can provide a glimmer of hope for Syrian kids in a variety of ways (Kirk and Cassity, 2007) but the involvement of educators is critical to the success of this process. The role of teachers' attitudes is crucial in Syrian students' ability to adapt to their classes and overcome the challenges in their lives. It is well known that teachers' attitudes are considered an important personality trait that influences the individuals they educate (Dolapçı and Kavgaçlı, 2020). Language challenges, cultural incompatibilities, and traumatic experiences are common for Syrian pupils. Szente et al., (2006) propose that teachers have three important tasks in helping Syrian students cope with challenges: assisting children in overcoming past traumas, supporting their academic adaptation, and fostering positive relationships between teachers and parents. Kaukko et al., (2021) emphasize a belief in their study that pedagogical affection can be created through teacher-student interactions in various ways despite the limited common language when students under temporary protection attend schools in host countries. At this stage, educators must go beyond simply transmitting academic knowledge. When observing the teacher as an educational leader in the classroom, having empathy skills, which are among the leadership abilities, is one of the requirements of a great teacher (Serter et al., 2019). Empathy is defined as "putting oneself in the shoes of another person and correctly understanding his feelings and thoughts" (Arslan, 2016). Empathic inclination, on the other hand, refers to an individual's ability to comprehend and experience the feelings of others (Zoll and Enz, 2005). In other words, it is a person's innate or learned predisposition to be sensitive to the emotional states of others (Yıldız and Emir, 2023). Empathy enables teachers to experience and comprehend what their students are feeling, communicate with them about that feeling, and then respond in a way that satisfies their needs (Huang et al., 2020). Teachers' empathic qualities are critical in assisting Syrian pupils' emotional and social development.

Teachers who are empathic can develop a more solid and meaningful relationship with their pupils and better understand their needs (Aldrup et al., 2022). According to research, teachers are not yet adequately prepared to welcome Syrian students', lack knowledge about their situation, have negative attitudes toward them, and act with low empathy and intercultural competence (Hain-Jamall, 2021; Li, 2018; McWilliams and Bonet, 2016; Tarman and Gürel, 2017). Young and future teachers appear to have less interest and empathy for Syrian students' in regions with a high percentage of newly arrived immigrants, such as Turkey, and experience significant levels of social rejection (Yitmen and Verkuyten, 2018).

Teachers' high empathetic tendency can be crucial in creating a better learning environment in the classroom. Students might build self-confidence and participate more actively in classroom activities when they feel understood. Developing teachers' empathic inclinations can thus improve Syrian students' educational experiences and aid in their successful integration. Teachers are less likely to acknowledge the needs, sentiments, and emotions of Syrian students when empathy is weak (Pala, 2008). Physical activity has been shown to improve pupils' health (Dhuli et al., 2022; Filippou et al., 2024), social skills (Martin-Rodriguez et al., 2024) and emotional well-being (Wang et al., 2022). Physical education teachers are crucial in this environment. Physical education is a practical lesson, which enables physical education teachers to interact directly with students and observe them more closely (Özbek et al., 2021). However, creating and implementing physical education classes for Syrian pupils may necessitate teachers having a particularly compassionate temperament. Syrian students' trauma, cultural differences, and language obstacles are key problems that physical education teachers must take into account (Cseplö et al., 2022; Özbek et al., 2021).

Studies in the literature on Syrian students (Berg, 2023; Börü and Boyacı, 2016; Cooc and Kim, 2023; Keskin and Okçu, 2021; Kılcan et al., 2017; Mormenekşe et al., 2023; Özer et al., 2019) When research on attitudes towards Syrians in the field of education is examined, it is seen that the research is concentrated in different areas, but less in the field of physical education and sports (Akman, 2020; Bartsch et al., 2021; Cseplö et al., 2022; Dolapçı and Kavgaçlı, 2020; Güler et al., 2021; Parsak and Saraç, 2021). In addition, there are many studies on empathic tendency in both national and international research (Çelikkaleli and Ökmen, 2021; Demir and Dilmaç, 2019; Dinçel et al., 2022; Kaçay et al., 2021; Warren, 2018), there are very few studies in the field of physical education and sports (Çıtak and Tabuk, 2022; Köroğlu and Yiğiter, 2023). In the last two decades, there has been a considerable surge in studies on empathy. According to a literature analysis, the number of articles published on empathy increased from 57 in 1995 to 560 in 2015 (Raine et al., 2022). During this time span, the number of publications on empathy nearly tenfold increased, indicating that this topic is garnering increased attention in both academic and scientific domains. Düzkaya (2016) states that many Syrians will not return to their country even if the war in their homeland ends and will stay in Turkey. Therefore, ensuring the integration of Syrians into Turkish society and the contributions that physical education teachers can make in this regard are important. An interesting research issue is the association between physical education teachers' empathetic propensity levels and their views toward Syrian students. Examining this relationship will assist our education system better serve Syrian students and help them assimilate successfully.

The following research questions were asked within the scope of the study:

1. Is there a significant relationship between physical education teachers' empathic tendency levels and their attitudes (communication, adaptation, competence) towards refugee students?

2. Do physical education teachers' empathic tendency levels significantly predict their attitudes (communication, adaptation, competence) towards refugee students?

METHOD

Research Model

One of the quantitative research models used in this study was the relational screening method. The relational scanning model is a research strategy that tries to objectively describe a condition or occurrence and evaluate the relationship between the elements affecting this situation as well as the degree of this relationship (Kaya et al., 2012).

Research Group

The research group of the study, which aims to determine the relationship between physical education teachers' empathic tendencies and their attitudes towards Syrian students, consists of 386 physical education teachers, including 200 males and 186 females, working in state schools in Adana province during the 2022-2023 academic year. The study group was reached through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling facilitates finding answers to the research question by reaching participants who have specific characteristics suitable for the research (Etikan et al., 2016). In the current study, this sampling method was used to reach teachers who are working with Syrian students. 231 of the teachers work at the secondary school level (59.8%) and 155 at the high school level (40.2%). When their service periods are examined, 45 (11.7%) are 10 years or less, 145 (37.6%) are 11-20 years, 145 (37.6%) are 21-30 years and 51 (13.2%) have 31 years or more of seniority. 266 (68.9%) of the teachers are married and 120 (31.1%) are single.

Data Collection Tools

Mersin University Social and Human Sciences Publication Ethics Committee provided the "Ethics Committee Report" dated 18/05/2021 and decision number 2021/06 to conduct the research. All participants were given thorough information about the study's objectives and procedures, and it was noted that participants were expected to be objective because proper answers were critical to the study's outcomes.

To collect data from research participants, a three-part research form was used. The first section of the form includes socio-demographic questions and personal information about the participants. The "Empathic Tendency Scale" (ETS) is included in the second section. The "Refugee Student Attitude Scale" is included in the third and final section.

Empathic Tendency Scale (ETS): Dökmen (1988) developed the empathic tendency scale to assess people's proclivity to sympathize in everyday situations. A 5-point Likert type system was used to assess 20 items on the empathetic inclination scale. The Empathic Tendency Scale has 8 items inverted (3,6,7,8,11,13,15). A high score indicates a strong empathic propensity, whereas a low score indicates a weak empathic tendency. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale calculated for the research group was .72. Cronbach's alpha of the empathetic inclination scale was calculated to be .87 in the current study.

Refugee Student Attitude Scale (RSAS): The "Refugee Student Attitude Scale (RSAS)" developed by Sağlam and Kanbur (2017) was used to investigate the attitudes of instructors working in schools with refugee students towards refugee students based on a variety of characteristics. The scale was established to have 24 components and three dimensions. The

first dimension has 11 elements and is called "communication," the second dimension has 9 items and is called "adaptation," and the third dimension has 4 items and is called "competence." All items on the scale are rated positively, and the respondent is given a four-point rating. The scale has a minimum score of 24 and a maximum score of 96. A high score reflects a favorable attitude toward refugee pupils. In terms of scale dependability, the alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated to be .91. This score indicates that the scale's items are consistent with one another. Internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated for each sub-dimension individually. The first sub-dimension reliability coefficient was determined to be .88, the second sub-dimension reliability coefficient was calculated to be .88, and the third sub-dimension reliability coefficient was calculated to be .80 (Sağlam and Kanbur, 2017). Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients calculated on the data obtained in this research were calculated as .81 in the overall scale, .70 in the "communication" sub-dimension, .65 in the "competency" sub-dimension, and .70 in the "competence" sub-dimension.

Analysis of Data

Pearson correlation analysis was used to investigate the association between physical education teachers' empathic tendencies and the attitude scale toward refugee students and its sub-dimensions: communication, adaption, and competence. Then, using a simple regression analysis method, the predictive potential of instructors' empathic inclinations toward refugee students' attitude scale and its sub-dimensions: communication, adaptation, and competence was determined. Before performing regression analysis, outlier values on the data set were identified, the data's appropriateness for normal distribution was assessed, and assumption tests were performed. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined to determine that the data were normally distributed. It has been observed that the skewness values range from 0.22 to -1.41, and the kurtosis values range from 0.11 to 1.78. Since the skewness and kurtosis values for each sub-dimension are between -2 and +2, it was concluded that the data showed normal distribution (George and Mallery, 2019). Univariate outliers were examined using z scores. Since the number of samples was more than 100, z scores were considered as the reference range between -4.00 and +4.00, and no data was found outside this range (Mertler and Vannatta, 2016). Within the scope of the research, Mahalanobis distances were investigated, but no extreme values were discovered. This result demonstrates that each observation in the data set is distributed according to the central tendency and that there are no statistical outliers. Furthermore, the variance increase factor (VIF), which is the regression assumption condition, was discovered to be less than 10 and the tolerance value was greater than 0.2, indicating that there was no multicollinearity problem (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013).

FINDINGS

The mean scores, standard deviations, greatest and lowest scores, skewness and kurtosis values of physical education teachers' empathetic tendencies and attitudes toward refugee pupils (communication, adaption, and competence) were studied within the scope of the study.

Descriptive statistics results of dependent and independent variables are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables

Variations	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Min-Max
Independent Variance				
Empathic Tendency	386	4.65	.528	1.85-4.65
Dependent Variations				
Communication	386	2.40	.295	1.63-3.27
Adaptation	386	2.25	.364	1.44-3.44
Competency	386	2.87	.474	1.50-3.75
Refugee Attitude	386	3.29	.294	1.71-3.29

When Table 1 is assessed, the empathic tendency mean score of physical education teachers is 4.65 (Sd=.528), the communication mean score is 2.40 (Sd =.295), the adaptation score mean is 2.25 (Sd=.364) and the competency mean score is 2.87 (Sd=.474) and the refugee student attitude score average is 3.29 (Sd=.295). According to the research findings, it can be said that the highest mean score is in the empathic tendency dimension.

Before regression analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to evaluate the relationships between dependent and independent variables. These correlation coefficients, which examine the relationships between variables, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The relationship between teachers' empathic tendency and refugee student attitudes

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Empathic tendency (Independent Variance)	1				
2. Communication (Dependent Variations)	.65*	1			
3. Adaptation (Dependent Variations)	.54*	.68*	1		
4. Competency (Dependent Variations)	.58*	.45*	.37*	1	
5. Refugee Attitude Total (Dependent Variations)	.70*	.71*	.75*	.64*	1

*p<0.05

When the correlation values between variables are evaluated in Table 2, teachers' empathic tendencies and the refugee student attitude scale sub-dimensions of communication, ($r=.65$, $p<.05$), adaptation ($r=.54$, $p<.05$) and competence ($r=.58$, $p<.05$). It was determined that there was a moderately positive significant relationship between (.58, $p<.05$). These findings show that in each model created, the correlation relationship between the variables is not at a level that would constitute a multicollinearity issue (Çokluk et al., 2014).

The regression analysis findings regarding the predictive variable of the study, empathic tendency, predicting the communication attitude of physical education teachers, one of the sub-dimensions of the attitude scale towards refugee students, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression analysis results regarding empathic tendency predicting communication attitude

Variacnes	B	Standart Error	β	T	P
Stable	1.15	.075		15.436	.000
Empathic Tendency	.366	.022	.654	16.946	.000*

R= .654 R²=.428 F= 287.15 p=.000

*p<0.05

Table 3 points out that empathic tendency significantly predicts the communication attitude of physical education teachers towards refugee students, one of the sub-dimensions of the attitude scale, and explains approximately 43% of the variance (R=.654; R²=.428; F₍₁₋₃₈₅₎ =287.15, p <.05). As a result of the regression analysis, the standardized regression coefficient of the empathic tendency variable on communication attitude was found to be β =.654. According to this value, a one-unit increase in empathic tendency is expected to increase communication attitude by .654 units.

Table 4. Regression analysis results regarding empathic tendency predicting compliance attitude

Variacne	B	Standart Error	β	T	P
Stable	.990	.103		9.631	.000
Empathic Tendency	.370	.030	.536	12.435	.000*

R= .536 R²=.287 F= 154.62 p=.000

*p<0.05

Table 4 indicates that empathic tendency significantly predicts the adaptation attitude, one of the sub-dimensions of the physical education teachers' attitude scale towards refugee students, and explains approximately 29% of the variance (R=.536; R²=.287; F₍₁₋₃₈₅₎ =154.62, p<.05). As a result of the regression analysis, the standardized regression coefficient of the empathic tendency variable on compliance attitude was found to be β =.536. According to this value, a one-unit increase in empathic tendency is anticipated to increase communication attitude by .536 units.

Table 5. Regression analysis results regarding empathic tendency predicting competence attitude

Variacnes	B	Standart Error	β	t	P
Stable	1.080	.129		8.393	.000
Empathic Tendency	.524	.037	.584	14.098	.000*

R= .585 R²=.341 F= 198.74 p=.000

*p<0.05

Table 5 shows that empathic tendency significantly predicts the competence attitude, one of the sub-dimensions of the physical education teachers' attitude scale towards refugee students and explains approximately 34% of the variance (R=.585; R²=.341; F₍₁₋₃₈₅₎ =198.74, p<.05). As a result of the regression analysis, the standardized regression coefficient of the empathic tendency variable on compliance attitude was found to be β = .584. According to this value, a one-unit increase in empathic tendency is expected to increase communication attitude by .584 units.

Table 6. Regression analysis results regarding empathic tendency predicting attitudes towards refugee students

Variations	B	Standart Error	β	t	P
Stable	1.079	.070		15.525	.000
Empathic Tendency	.394	.020	.707	19.698	.000*

R= .707 R²=.501 F= 384.85 p=.000

*p<0.05

Table 6 shows that empathic tendency significantly predicts physical education teachers' attitudes towards refugee students and explains approximately 71% of the variance ($R=.707$; $R^2=.501$; $F_{(1-385)}=384.85$, $p<.05$). As a result of the regression analysis, the standardized regression coefficient of the empathic tendency variable on compliance attitude was found to be $\beta=.707$. According to this value, a one-unit increase in empathic tendency is expected to increase communication attitude by .707 units.

DISCUSSION and RESULT

The objective of this research was to determine whether physical education teachers' empathetic propensity degree is a predictor of their attitude toward Syrian students. It was concluded that empathetic propensity and its sub-dimensions (communication, adaption, and competence) are major predictors of attitudes toward refugee pupils. According to the regression analysis results, physical education teachers' empathetic inclination level strongly positively predicted the refugee student attitude scale and its sub-dimensions, communication, adaption, and competence.

The extent of empathic propensity was found to explain 43% of the total variance in the communication score, one of the sub-dimensions of attitude toward refugee pupils. This demonstrates that empathetic tendencies explain a considerable portion of teachers' communication success with Syrian children. The findings suggest that empathic approaches used by teachers can help pupils communicate more effectively. Communication is the most effective instrument for connecting people, and a healthy communication process allows the individual not only to express his/her own feelings and thoughts comfortably, but also to understand the other individual's feelings and views (Maden, 2010). Harwood (2010) argues that individuals with lower language and communication skills are at a disadvantage in directing the flow of intergroup interaction towards a positive outcome. Communication skills are among the most crucial qualities that teachers must possess (Çetinkaya, 2011; Koçak and Önen, 2013). Healthy communication and empathic understanding are concepts that are inextricably linked (Karaman et al., 2017). The attitude of educators toward Syrian pupils is a critical aspect in determining their performance and adaption in the educational process. By better understanding their prior experiences and emotional states, a teacher with a high empathetic inclination can connect more effectively with Syrian students. This relationship is critical for physical education teachers in terms of developing effective communication with students and making the learning process more effective. Teachers with empathetic tendencies can foster a healthy learning environment in the classroom by recognizing their students' emotional needs. When the research on the subject is evaluated (Ahmetoğlu and Acar, 2016; Aydın, 2023; Cooper et al., 2000; Ögüt et al., 2022), it emerges that empathetic tendencies play an essential role in interpersonal communication. Empathetic tendencies, according to academics, are a key talent for efficient communication in sectors like as psychology, psychiatry, and education (Uludemir and Özerk, 2021). The literature supports the association between physical education teachers' empathetic dispositions and communicative attitudes.

The level of empathic propensity was found to explain 29% of the total variance in the adaptability score, one of the sub-dimensions of the attitude scale toward refugee pupils. This finding suggests that empathetic tendencies are related to adaptation attitudes toward Syrian students, and that physical education teachers with empathic qualities are more adaptable to Syrian students. The rise in refugee movement and migration over the last two decades has highlighted the adaptation processes of refugee pupils in school settings (Akman, 2020). Physical education sessions, in particular, play an essential role in children's social and emotional development. According to the findings of the study, physical education teachers' empathic tendencies have an important role in molding the adaptation processes of Syrian kids to school. Teachers' empathic techniques can help students adjust by establishing relationships, enhancing emotional well-being, and providing a more positive learning environment in the classroom. Although empathy is a crucial aspect influencing the adaptation of Syrian pupils, the influence of other factors should not be overlooked. At this stage, it is critical to do additional studies to increase physical education teachers' sympathetic tendencies toward Syrian children.

The level of empathic propensity explained 34% of the overall variance in the proficiency score, one of the sub-dimensions of the attitude scale toward refugee pupils, according to the study. The current finding suggests that physical education teachers' empathetic dispositions have a particularly strong influence on their self-efficacy judgments of teaching Syrian pupils. Physical education teachers' evaluations of their own abilities are vital in effectively interacting with Syrian students, adopting appropriate instructional practices for them, and contributing more effectively to their education. may affect your skills. Columna et al., (2010) concluded in their study that physical education teachers generally value cultural diversity but struggle to implement culturally responsive pedagogy. This finding emphasizes the importance of empathetic tendencies in physical education teachers. Understanding students' cultural differences and being sensitive to them can contribute to developing a more empathetic approach. Consequently, the preparation and education required to create a culturally responsive and inclusive environment in physical education classes can be more effectively provided.

The study discovered that physical education teachers' empathetic propensity level explained 50% of the total variance in the attitude scale score towards refugee students. Teachers have a significant influence on students' cultural interactions (Biçer and Alptekin, 2021). Karabenick and Noda (2004) found in their research that when teachers have a positive attitude towards immigrant students, the students are more successful in the educational process. Teachers' professional tasks include caring for pupils and fostering positive teacher-student interactions (Butler, 2012; Watt et al., 2021). In his study conducted in the England, Hek (2005) states that refugee students perceive themselves as even more helpless when they believe that teachers do not listen to them and treat them poorly. Moreover according to research, teachers who show empathy for their students are more likely to intervene in a bullying situation (Byers et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2018; Sokol et al., 2016; Yoon, 2004). According to Wink et al., (2021), teachers with high levels of empathy have more favorable perceptions about student conduct and are more competent in dealing with negative behaviors. Findings in the literature emphasize the importance of empathic tendency in disadvantaged groups such as Syrian students (Soral et al., 2022). The reason why physical education teachers' empathic tendency affects their attitudes towards Syrian students may be that teachers understand and feel what the students are going through with their empathetic approach. Empathetic teachers have a better understanding of the issues that Syrian pupils confront. This means that they are more sensitive and understanding of pupils' needs.

Based on the study results, the importance of developing various training programs to enhance physical education teachers' empathic tendencies is evident. These programs will help teachers better understand the challenges experienced by Syrian students and support students more effectively. However, it is known that there are different views regarding the development of empathic tendencies in individuals. Some researchers suggest that empathic tendencies are innate and more related to individuals' attitudes, hence changing them is a lengthy process (Çelik and Çağdaş, 2010). On the other hand, Rogers and Akkoyun, (1983) states that empathy is a trait that can be developed and taught through education. Research has also shown positive results from programs aimed at improving individuals' empathy skills, indicating that empathy can indeed be developed through education (Feschbach, 1979; Ulus, 2015). In their study conducted with school principals in Canada et al., (2017) emphasized the need for changes in the training provided to teachers to ensure social justice and equality. They particularly highlighted the necessity of developing strategies for communication with students, families, especially those experiencing forced migration, and refugees. It is evident that programs involving policymakers, school administrators, teachers, local and Syrian students, and parents are essential for the adaptation process of Syrian children to school. Workshops aimed at enhancing communication skills should be organized for physical education teachers. Topics such as effective communication, sensitivity, and empathetic listening can be covered in these courses. As Levent and Çayak (2017) pointed out, it is necessary to provide multicultural education seminars to teachers so that they can deliver education services in line with the culture of Syrian students and Turkish students. Moreover, considering that Syrians coming to Turkey will stay for many years, it is essential to include multicultural education courses in the curriculum of physical education teacher candidates in Sports Science Faculties to enhance their competencies in multicultural education throughout their professional lives. Furthermore, the study must encompass a broader student population, not just refugee students, and assess the impact of increasing empathic inclinations on disadvantaged populations. A larger sample can be chosen by considering numerous criteria such as students' socioeconomic status, language capabilities, and learning challenges.

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