



Bedens Eğitimi Öğretmen Adaylarının Çocuk Sevgisi ve Çocuğa Yönelik Şiddete Duyarlık Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi

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ORJINAL MAKALE

Özet

Bu çalışma, bedens eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının çocuk sevgisi ve çocuğa yönelik şiddete duyarlık düzeylerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma Mersin Üniversitesi'nde öğrenim gören 179 bedens eğitimi öğretmen adayı (91 kadın, 88 erkek) üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak Demografik Bilgi Formu, Çocuk Sevme Ölçeği ve Çocuğa Yönelik Şiddete Duyarlık Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analizinde bağımsız *t*-testi, tek yönlü varyans analizi ve Pearson korelasyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, bedens eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının çocuk sevgisi ve çocuğa yönelik şiddete duyarlık düzeylerinin genel olarak yüksek olduğunu ve cinsiyet ve sınıf düzeyi değişkenlerine göre anlamlı düzeyde farklılaşmadığını göstermiştir. Bunun yanında bulgular, bedens eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının çocuk sevgisi ve çocuğa yönelik şiddete duyarlık düzeyinin ilişkili olmadığını ortaya koymuştur. Çalışmanın sonuçları, bedens eğitimi öğretmen yetiştirme programı müfredatının çocuk odaklı olarak gözden geçirilmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Çocuk Sevgisi, Çocuğa Şiddet, Şiddete Duyarlık, Bedens Eğitimi, Öğretmen Adayı

Examination of Liking Children and Violence Sensitivity Toward Children in Physical Education Candidate Teachers

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the level of liking for and violence sensitivity toward children among physical education candidate teachers. The study was conducted on a sample of 179 candidate physical education teachers (91 females and 88 males) studying at Mersin University. The Demographic Information Form, Barnett Liking of Children Scale, and Violence Sensitivity Toward Children Scale were used as data collection instruments. The data obtained were analyzed using an independent sample t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and Pearson correlation analysis. The results showed that levels of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children were generally high among physical education candidate teachers and did not differ significantly according to gender and grade level variables. In addition, the results showed no relationship between the level of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children among physical education candidate teachers. The results of the study show that the curriculum of the physical education teacher training program should be revised in a child-oriented way.

***Keywords:** Children Liking, Violence to Children, Violence Sensitivity, Physical Education, Teacher Candidate*

Introduction

Research has shown that effective teaching is dependent on the ability of the teacher to truly value each student as an individual learner. This approach allows teachers to respond effectively to the specific educational requirements of their students, increasing their engagement and helping them to identify their areas of excellence and areas for improvement (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Witcher et al., 2001). Recent educational research has emphasized the importance of developing positive teacher-pupil relationships, rather than teachers feeling obliged to care for their pupils (Kohl, 1984). The main reason for this is the fact that children have multi-dimensional and complex needs, including physical, emotional, and educational needs. These needs require careful consideration of the overall well-being of the child, and genuine care and love for the pupil have a direct bearing on the appropriate educational decision-making process. With this holistic approach to the development of the students, supported by the teachers' affection for their students, children are being raised who are healthy and happy in all aspects of their lives. That, in turn, helps to meet the critical and long-term needs of the country and society for well-trained, well-adjusted citizens (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Rogers & Webb, 1991). More broadly, the warm and loving relationships that teachers have with students encourage their commitment to learning and teachers' support of their social, intellectual, and emotional development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; O'Donoghue et al., 1994). It is emphasized that the love that will be formed for the students requires effort, time, care, and attention; that it is more than just a simple love; that it can significantly impact a student's entire life; and that it directly relates love and attention to the teacher's ability to make wise decisions about the students and their educational needs (Kohl, 1984; Goldstein & Lake, 2000). It is a widely held view in the academic community that a successful teacher who cares about her students is much more than well-trained and prepared in her subject (Brown et al., 2008). According to Lasley's (1980) research, candidate teachers believed that their love for children was a good sign of how effective they would be in their lessons if they enjoyed being around their students and had a positive relationship with them. In a related study, candidate teachers claimed that an effective teacher "loves" students and is student-centered (Witcher & Onwuegbuzie, 1999). From the teacher's point of view, affection for children is necessary for effective teaching, and it has also been argued that the emotions of pupils who are loved by their teachers make a positive contribution to their academic progress (Devine et al., 2013). Research on candidate teachers in Turkey has shown that one of the top motivations for entering the teaching profession is "loving students," which supports the studies

mentioned above (Sancar & Deryakulu, 2020; Ubuz & Sarı, 2008). According to a study conducted in the United States, "loving children, helping children, and working for children" are among the reasons that influence candidate teachers' choice of the teaching profession (Marso & Pigge, 1994; Pigge & Marso, 1988).

Teaching requires human concern, devotion, warmth, and love (Minor et al., 2002; Walls et al., 2002). As caring for students is a strong feeling among teachers and a key source of job satisfaction, teachers' individual beliefs about their roles in caring for students form a vital component of their identity (Spilt et al., 2011). Teaching is therefore seen as an interpersonal experience of love that requires care and protection of vulnerable individuals such as children, as in other related professions (nurses, social workers, etc.), based on humanitarianism (O'Connor, 2008). A study showed that teachers' lives are built more on fostering relationships of mutual warmth, love, and self-confidence with their students than on engaging in cognitive learning or teaching activities and that teachers describe themselves as "rescuers" and "haven-makers." Teachers expressed similar views on the responsibilities of looking over and protecting each student in the same study (Crow, 1991). Teaching has been formally portrayed as equal to the duties and responsibilities of women and men at home, including childcare, and has been examined in many studies as a profession of care and compassion, rather than as a historically high-status career (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; James, 2010; James, 2012; Zhang, 2007).

The Barnett Liking of Children Scale has been widely used in both national and international research studies to assess individuals' fondness for children. Its practicality and acceptance among education stakeholders make it a commonly employed tool for measuring attitudes toward children (Barnett & Sinisi, 1990; Duyan & Gelbal, 2008). National studies have extensively investigated the extent to which teachers and trainee teachers like children in different settings (e.g. nursery, primary and secondary schools). These studies also explored the impact of different variables, such as gender, age, grade level taught, teaching experience, and marital status, on the level of liking for children. Studies have consistently found high levels of liking for children among both in-service teachers and pre-service teachers, despite variations in these variables (Durmuşoğlu Saltalı & Erbay, 2013; Ergin & Bozer Öz Saraç, 2017; Gelbal & Duyan, 2010; Kabaklı Çimen, 2015; Kaynak et al., 2015). A research study focusing on preschool teachers found that providing love and care is fundamental to meeting young children's developmental and educational needs, and showed that preschool teachers' liking of children is directly related to meeting these essential needs (Yazici, 2014). The findings

highlighted that preschool teachers who were 37 years old and above, married or had children of their own demonstrated higher levels of affection and care towards the children in their care compared to their younger, single, and childless counterparts. Despite these variations, it was noted that overall, preschool teachers displayed above-average levels of love and concern for the children they taught (Yazici, 2014). Another study by Faiz et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of teachers as individuals who have a real love for children and derive satisfaction from their work and stressed the importance of teachers in developing individuals who are adaptable, innovative, and able to cope with the rapid changes that occur in the field of education. Examining the level of affection among primary school and social science teachers for children Faiz et al revealed that while the age and teaching experience of the teachers did not significantly impact their level of affection for children, female and primary school teachers exhibited higher levels of affection than their male and social science teaching counterparts. Based on the importance of accepting children with love in both family and school environments to keep them healthy in terms of mind, body, and spirit, Türk et al. (2017) examined the love for children of primary and secondary school teachers and found that liking for children did not differ according to the gender of the teachers, liking for children increased with increasing age, and married teachers and teachers with children had a higher liking for children than single teachers and teachers without children.

The literature suggests that students will achieve their educational goals in a safe school environment with caring teachers, based on their perceptions of their education, but many issues require sensitivity to students, such as violence (Cohen et al., 2009). Even though students spend most of their days outside the home in a safe and teacher-supervised environment at school (Pressley et al., 2020; Sherozia & Tskhvaradze, 2018), teachers cannot protect their students from all threats both within and outside the classroom (Hawkins et al., 1999). To support this statement, children worldwide are ignored, exposed to abuse or violence, or forced to live in deplorable conditions. Every year, 1 billion children, or one out of every two, are exposed to various forms of violence worldwide according to the World Health Organization 2020 report. In Turkey, in 2020, 450.803 juveniles were admitted to security units for various reasons, including being pushed into crime, committing a misdemeanor, or being misplaced or found; 170.961 children were reported as victims of multiple incidents, including theft, threats, sexual assault, kidnapping, and so forth (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2021). Parents have the right to bring up their children in any way they see fit, but they must do so for the benefit of the children and for the rights of the children (Van Manen, 1991). When they are unable to do so,

when they are unable to protect their children from harm, meet their basic needs, or mistreat children, society has the responsibility and right to intervene to protect their health and well-being because child safety is a social issue rather than an individual one (Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey, 1995; Przeperski & Owusu, 2021; Westman, 1999; Wolock & Horowitz, 1984). Educators are a vital part of society; they can lead and participate in community programs to reduce child maltreatment because childhood exposure to violence substantially impacts physical and mental health, and academic achievement (Crosson Tower, 2003; Lloyd, 2018). Teachers play a crucial role in preventing, identifying, and rehabilitating child maltreatment because they have close and continuous contact with children, professional and legal obligations to report child maltreatment, and the school has the resources to offer programs and services that can help and support children and their families (Crosson Tower, 2003; Eisenbraun, 2007). Teachers are in an excellent position to evaluate behavioral changes in pupils because they are familiar with the range of behaviors displayed by children at various developmental stages and can immediately detect behaviors outside this range (Briggs & Hawkins, 1997). To avoid children being negatively influenced in the short or long term, it is necessary to notify and alert official units to explore the potential causes of these behavioral changes based on violence against children and to intervene in the situation. Studies have shown that a significant portion of the professional group that notifies and reports the adverse treatment of children comprises educators (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Although preventing child abuse is a worthwhile goal, there are instances in which it cannot be accomplished for a variety of reasons (apathy, circumstances of the case, etc.), including the insensitivity of the person who is the reporter (Goebbels et al., 2008; Hazzard & Rupp, 1986; Kenny, 2004; O'Toole et al., 1999; Schols et al., 2013). As teachers' sensitivity to violence against children may influence their decision to report such incidents, it is crucial to examine this issue in education. In one of the few studies on the subject in Turkey, the sensitivity of teacher candidates to violence against children was assessed and it was found that teachers' sensitivity levels were high, with Turkish language majors having the lowest levels compared to science majors, who had the highest levels (Kula & Akbulut, 2020). Another study examined the sensitivity of midwifery, nursing, nutrition and dietetics, and social work students to violence against children and reported that the sensitivity of students to violence against children was higher and that the sensitivity of students studying in the social work department, studying in the first year and having a patriarchal family type was lower than that of students in other departments, studying in the second, third and fourth years and having a non-patriarchal family structure (Büyük et al., 2023). Gülbahçe (2018) examined the sensitivity of secondary

school teachers to child abuse and found that the level of sensitivity to child abuse varied according to variables such as age, gender, and parenthood. Researchers investigating the level of sensitivity to violence towards children among undergraduate students studying in various health-related fields also found that there was no difference in sensitivity to violence towards children between students studying in the fields of health technology, midwifery, physiotherapy and rehabilitation. The level of sensitivity increased with the year of study, and the sensitivity of women was higher than that of men (Koca et al., 2019). Bağçeli Kahraman and Onur Sezen (2017) examined the relationship between child rights and love for the child, which is another similar construct to this study, although not directly sensitive to violence against the child, among primary, kindergarten, social science, math, and science and technology candidate teachers. The researchers found that although there were differences between the fields of prospective teachers, both the level of liking for children and the attitude toward children's rights were high, and there was no relationship between the level of liking for children and the attitude toward children's rights, except for prospective teachers in the field of elementary education. Demir Acar and Yilmaz Bingol (2022), examining the identification of symptoms and risks of child abuse and neglect and the level of liking for children among students of the child development department, found that the level of liking for children among students was high and the factors of second grade, previous exposure to child abuse and knowledge of the child and his/her family were factors in terms of identification of symptoms and risks of child abuse and neglect. The researchers also reported that there was no association between identifying the symptoms and risks of child abuse and neglect and being fond of children (Demir Acar & Yilmaz Bingol, 2022).

In school physical education (PE) classes, students engage in a variety of activities, both as part of the curriculum and outside of regular class hours. These activities encompass school team sports, exercise aimed at improving physical fitness, and other related pursuits. PE teachers have the opportunity to build strong connections with their students, both within the school environment and beyond, by displaying qualities such as warmth, compassion, sensitivity, attentiveness, and emotional availability, as well as allocating time to engage with their students (Owen & Ennis, 2005). In teacher training programs, it is necessary to develop PE candidate teachers' levels of love for children and their violence sensitivity toward children. Eliminating any negativities in future teachers' attitudes towards student-related issues, that is, children, on various issues is too important to be left to chance. For this reason, it is also critical to reveal the attitudes of candidate teachers studying in teacher training programs on these

issues and take the necessary precautions against possible negative situations before they are appointed to the profession. Understanding PE candidate teachers' beliefs about children is crucial, as these beliefs influence what they learn during their training programs, and many adopt ideas that align with their personal preferences (Barrett, 1972; Doolittle et al., 1993). In addition, it is critical to examine PE teachers' and candidate teachers' levels of liking for children in different fields of education, including PE, because research suggests that teachers' liking for children and their teaching effectiveness are related (Walls et al., 2002). The PE course will impact students' lives because it aims to develop fundamental movements, active and healthy life skills, concepts, and strategies they use throughout their lives. It will also impact their associated life skills and values, self-management skills, social skills, and thinking skills (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). When their interactions with teachers are based on love, equality, and a peaceful environment, students may only bravely and directly participate in instructional activities to experience and realize their teaching objectives (Fan, 2015). The literature emphasizes that students should be approached with love to make them happy, comfortable, and in a good mood in a PE setting. The teacher is required to build a special relationship with students to arouse their desire to learn new skills, make them love sports, and encourage them to practice lifelong movement skills (Fan, 2015). In one of the few studies on love for children in the field of PE, Akçınar and Tokcan (2023) investigated the level of liking for children among PE teachers in terms of various variables. The results of the study showed that love for children of PE teachers did not differ according to gender, marital status, having or not having children, age, educational status, location of the school in which the teacher worked, and duration of teaching experience. The researchers also reported that teachers' love for children was related to their attitude towards the teaching profession. Yaylaci and Ilhan (2014), who investigated love for children in the field of coaching individual and team sports, which is another field that appeals to children, found that the level of coaches' liking for children differed according to the level of certification, but the level of coaches' liking for children was higher than average. In PE classes that aim to support children and adolescents in maintaining a healthy life in terms of physical, psychological, social, and cognitive development, PE teachers play an important role in creating an environment that meets the needs of holistic development (de Bruijn et al., 2022). In addition, the activities in PE courses are different in terms of eliciting different emotions and feelings in comparison to activities in other academic areas (Ciotto & Gagnon, 2018). PE can also support the emergence of different types of traumatic experiences in children, especially concerning the physical component of the practice in terms of the subjects covered, the environment in which learning takes place, and

the interactions that occur in these environments (Quarmby et al., 2022). In such situations, a teacher's response may be influenced by several factors, including their level of care for children, awareness of the issue, and violence sensitivity toward children (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992). Examination of children in the context of PE is critical. Moreover, PE teachers and candidate teachers' levels of liking for children have received little attention and need to be better studied. The findings of this study will help close this gap in the field. In addition to this, there are differences in the level of violence sensitivity toward children in different field teachers; the limited number of studies examining the level of sensitivity of teachers or candidate teachers to violence against children; and the fact that there is almost no research in the field of PE are the reasons that it is necessary to examine the violence sensitivity toward children in the field of education. As a result, this study is expected to contribute to the relevant literature. Based on the literature presented above, this study aimed to determine whether the liking of children and violence sensitivity toward children differed by gender and grade level among PE candidate teachers and to investigate whether there is a relationship between liking of children and violence sensitivity toward children. Within the aim of the study, the following research questions have been identified:

- What is the difference in the liking of the children of the PE candidate teachers according to the gender and the grade level they have studied?
- What is the difference in the violence sensitivity toward children of the PE candidate teachers according to the gender and the grade level they have studied?
- What is the relationship between liking of the children and violence sensitivity toward children among PE candidate teachers

Materials and Method

Research Design

The current study has adopted a research design that involves measuring two or more relevant variables simultaneously and assessing the relationship between or among these variables. This design is both cross-sectional in nature and correlational in nature, which allows for a comprehensive analysis of the data.

Participants

The students of Mersin University, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science, Department of Physical Education and Sports, were included in the study. A total of 179 PE

candidate teachers, 50.8% female, and 49.2% male, as determined by the convenience sampling method, were enrolled in the study. The mean age for the female participants was 21.49 (± 1.96), while for the male participants, it was 21.60 (± 1.83). Of those 179 PE candidate teachers, 23% were 1st, 23% were 2nd, 28% were 3rd and 25% were 4th graders.

Data Collection Instruments

Data for the study were gathered using the Demographic Information Form, the Barnett Liking of Children Scale, and the Violence Sensitivity Towards Children Scale.

Demographic Information Form

The demographic form included questions about the gender (female, male), age (date of birth), and grade level (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th) of the physical education candidate teacher, which was prepared by the researchers according to the purpose of the study.

Barnett Liking of Children Scale

The study used the Barnett Liking of Children Scale (BLOCS) to assess the attitudes of PE candidate teachers toward children. This particular scale was developed by Barnett and Sinisi in 1990 as a tool for the measurement of individuals' attitudes towards children. The original BLOCS was translated into Turkish by Duyan and Gelbal in 2008, making it possible to use the BLOCS in different cultural and linguistic contexts. BLOCS is a widely used scale in education studies to measure the level of liking that teachers and candidate teachers have for children (Gelbal & Duyan, 2010; Kabaklı Çimen, 2015; Hayes et al., 1998). The scale has 14 items with a 7-point Likert type (1 = I totally disagree, 7 = I totally agree). Of the 14 items, 10 were positive statements, and 4 were negative statements (3, 6, 10, and 13). In calculating the total score to be obtained from the scale, the marked score for each statement is summed. The scale has a range of scores from 14 to 98. According to the scale, high scores reflect a high level of liking for children, while low scores reflect a low level of liking for children. As the scale was being developed, Barnett and Sinisi (1990) computed the reliability coefficient as .93. The internal consistency coefficient obtained in the process of adaptation to Turkish culture was calculated to be .92 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.85; the results of the principal component analysis applied to determine the validity of the scale showed that all 14 items of the scale had high factor loadings in the first dimension and the overall variability of the first factor was 51.83% (Duyan & Gelbal, 2008). The reliability coefficient for this study was calculated to be .86.

Violence Sensitivity Toward Children Scale

The Violence Sensitivity Towards Children Scale (VSTCS) was developed by Özyürek (2017) and was used to assess the sensitivity levels of PE candidate teachers' violence against children. The one-dimensional scale has 19 items. Items 3, 12, 14, and 18 on the scale are negative and are scored in reverse. The scale is a three-point Likert scale (1= Agree, 2= Partially agree, 3= Disagree). The scale score was calculated by adding the scores assigned to each of the 19 statements. The scale has a possible range of scores ranging from 19 to 57. Higher scale scores suggest a higher level of sensitivity to child violence, whereas low scores indicate a lower level of sensitivity. In the process of scale development, factor loading values obtained as a result of exploratory factor analysis showed that the scale was single-factor and explained 24.92% of the total variance and the validity of the scale has been revealed (Özyürek, 2017). The reliability coefficient during the development of the scale was .82 (Özyürek, 2017) and the reliability coefficient of this study was calculated as .67.

Data Collection and Ethical Procedures

The research was conducted in compliance with the guidelines outlined in the Higher Education Research and Publication Ethics Policy to ensure the ethical conduct and validity of the study. Before the start of the study, approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of the organization where the data will be collected, and official consent was obtained from the organization where the data will be collected. This process ensured that the study adhered to standards and respected the rights and privacy of the individuals involved. During the spring semester of the 2021–2022 academic year, researchers conducted a study involving male and female students in the first through fourth grades, who were enrolled in the Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Physical Education and Sports. Specific data collection tools (Demographic Information Form, BLOCS, and VSTCS) were used to collect information from students. After careful consideration of the best approach, the specific courses in which PE candidate teachers would be most suitable for data collection were identified, and their instructors were contacted for the study. The lecturers of these courses were informed of the study and asked for their consent to proceed with the study. After obtaining the necessary consent, the students in the classes were informed of the study and invited to participate voluntarily. The demographic information form and two scales were given to the students in a face-to-face manner. Until the participating students completed the data collection

instruments, the researchers waited in the classroom to answer any questions. It took approximately 10 minutes for the data collection instruments to be implemented effectively.

Data Analysis

The analysis revealed a normal distribution with skewness and kurtosis values between -1.0 and +1.0, allowing for a parametric test to be qualified. The study employed an independent samples *t*-test to examine potential differences between female and male PE candidate teachers in their liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children. Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was used to explore differences between first, second, third, and fourth-grade PE candidate teachers in their liking for children and violence sensitivity towards children. Moreover, Pearson’s correlation analysis was utilized to assess the potential correlations between PE candidate teachers’ liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children.

Results

An independent samples *t*-test was used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between male and female PE candidate teachers in terms of their level of liking for children and their violence sensitivity toward children. The study found no significant difference in the levels of liking for children among PE candidate teachers based on gender [$t(177)= 1.05, p= .30$]. Similarly, the study found no significant difference in the sensitivity of PE candidate teachers to violence against children based on gender [$t(177)= 1.51, p= .13$] (Table 1). The female and male participants' levels of love for children ($\bar{x}_{\text{female}}= 88.80, \bar{x}_{\text{male}}= 87.25$) and violence sensitivity toward children ($\bar{x}_{\text{female}}= 52.67, \bar{x}_{\text{male}}= 51.84$) were similar, according to these findings (Figure 1).

Table 1

Comparisons of BLOCS and VSTCS Scores of PE Candidate Teachers by Gender

	Gender	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
BLOCS	Female	91	88,80	9,26	1.05
	Male	88	87,25	10,52	
VSTCS	Female	91	52,67	2,90	1.51
	Male	88	51,84	4,33	

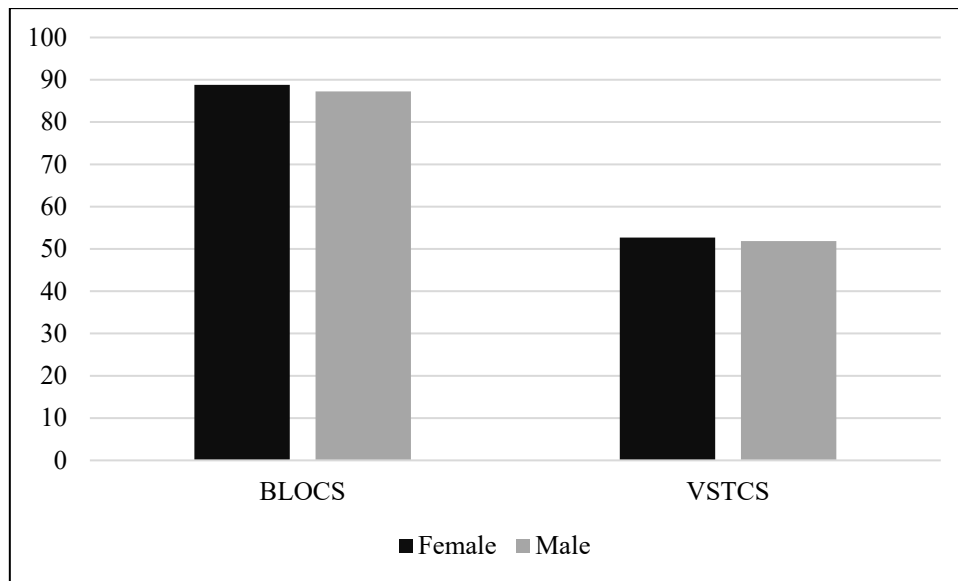


Figure 1

Mean BLOCS and VSTCS Scores of PE Candidate Teachers by Gender

The study conducted a one-way analysis of variance to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children concerning PE candidate teachers' grade level. The analysis of results revealed no statistically significant difference between the levels of like for children of PE candidate teachers studying in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades [$F(3, 175) = .50, p = .68$]. The analysis revealed a difference in the level of violence sensitivity toward children of candidate teachers studying in the first, second, third, and fourth grades [$F(3, 175) = 2.85, p = .04$]; but the post hoc analysis revealed that the level of violence sensitivity toward children did not differ by grade level, $p > .05$ (Table 2). The participants' levels of love for children ($\bar{x}_{1stGrade} = 87.98, \bar{x}_{2ndGrade} = 86.60, \bar{x}_{3rdGrade} = 89.12, \bar{x}_{4thGrade} = 88.24$) and violence sensitivity toward children ($\bar{x}_{1stGrade} = 52.43, \bar{x}_{2ndGrade} = 50.86, \bar{x}_{3rdGrade} = 52.84, \bar{x}_{4thGrade} = 52.78$) were similar, according to these findings (Figure 1).

Table 2

Comparisons of BLOCS and VSTCS Scores of PE Candidate Teachers by Grade Level

	Grade Level	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>
BLOCS	1st-grade	42	87.98	9.40	.50
	2nd-grade	42	86.60	10.45	
	3rd-grade	50	89.12	8.63	
	4th-grade	45	88.24	11.23	
VSTCS	1st-grade	42	52.43	3.49	2.85*
	2nd-grade	42	50.86	4.36	
	3rd-grade	50	52.84	3.13	
	4th-grade	45	52.78	3.69	

* $p < .05$

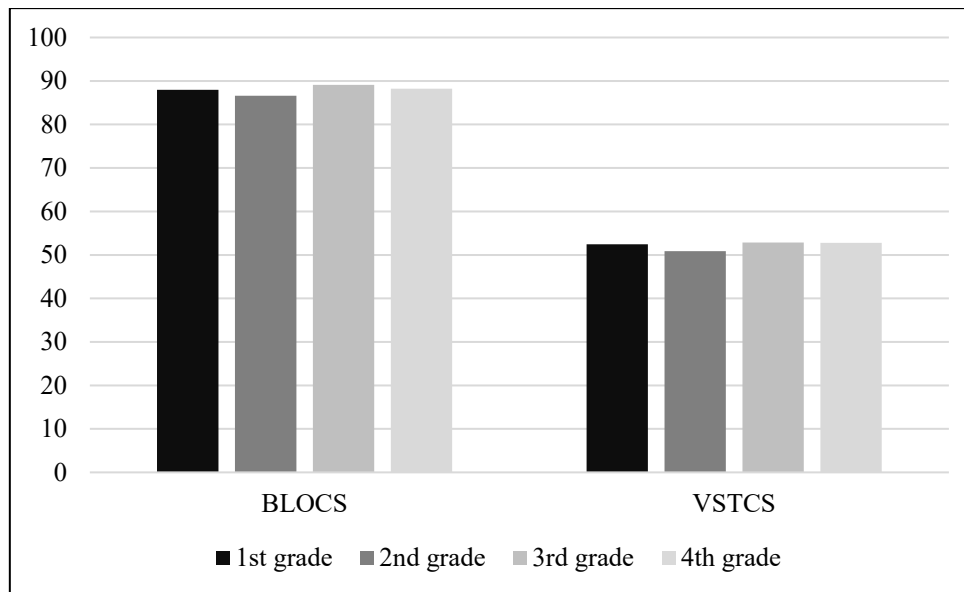


Figure 1

Mean BLOCS and VSTCS Scores of PE Candidate Teachers by Grade Level

The research study used a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to investigate whether there was a correlation between the level of liking for children among PE candidate teachers and their sensitivity to violence towards children. The results of the study indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between the level of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children among the participants [$r = .093$, $n = 179$, $p = .216$].

Discussion and Conclusions

The results related to the first research question concerning the difference in PE candidate teachers' liking for children according to gender and grade level showed that there was no significant difference in the candidate teachers' liking for children according to gender or grade level. The review of average scores revealed that both female and male PE candidate teachers displayed high levels of liking for children. Several studies have assessed the level of liking for children among candidate teachers and in-service teachers. Many of these studies produced results consistent with the current research findings. Studies indicate that in-service teachers in primary, secondary, and high schools exhibit equal levels of liking for children, regardless of gender (Ergin & Bozer Özşaraç, 2017; Gelbal & Duyan, 2010; İlğan et al., 2018; Türk et al., 2017). Studies that have included the participation of candidate teachers have also shown that the level of liking for children does not vary according to gender (Demirtaş, 2018; Kabaklı Çimen, 2015). Studies that are not comparable to this research have found that gender differences exist in the degree of in-service teachers' liking for children, with female teachers

showing a higher level of liking for children than male teachers (Ercan, 2014; Faiz et al., 2016). Similar results were observed in the sample of candidate teachers, indicating that females had higher levels of liking for children than males (Küçükali & Kadan, 2018; Özyıldırım, 2020; Yazici, 2013). Yaylaci and Ilhan's (2014) study found no significant difference in childlikeness among football coaches or PE candidate teachers, regardless of gender, and no significant difference in liking for children by grade level, despite the lack of research on this topic in PE and sports. To support these findings, Dereli İman (2014) examined preschool teachers' liking levels for children and found that candidate teachers' liking levels did not differ by grade. However, according to Yazici (2013), pre-service teachers' liking levels for children vary depending on the grade level at which they enroll. Fourth-grade candidate teachers had higher levels of liking for children than did those in the first, second, and third grades. While interpreting the findings of other studies that are similar or dissimilar to this research, it should be noted that male and female candidate teachers of various grades have a high level of liking for children. The primary reason PE candidate teachers have such a high level of liking for children a love that does not differ by gender or grade level may be that they choose the PE teaching profession because of their liking for children. According to the literature mentioned above, the level of liking for children is one of the most important factors influencing people to pursue the teaching profession (Alvariñas-Villaverde et al., 2022; Brown, 1992; Haubrich, 1960; Kyriacou et al., 1999; Yong, 1995). In the Cyprus sample, for example, "loving children" was rated as one of the most important motivations driving candidate teachers to pursue elementary education (Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 1998). The fact that PE candidate teachers' attitudes toward children and teaching, in general, did not change during the socialization process of student teaching, may be another explanation for why gender and grade level did not have an impact on how much they liked children. This is because PE candidate teachers choose the PE teaching profession of their own will, and their prior beliefs and ideals for both teaching and students are strong and difficult to change during teacher education programs (McLaughlin, 1991; Sinclair, 2008). According to the relevant literature, educators' love for their students is intense, deep, and passionate, as is their interest in their student's academic and personal development (Loui, 2006), and this interest and love are among the main factors that affect students' academic progress (Lasley, 1980).

The findings of the study concerning the second research question concerning the difference in PE candidate teachers' violence sensitivity toward children by gender and year level also revealed that PE candidate teachers have a high level of violence sensitivity toward

children, consistent across gender and grade levels, similar to their level of liking of children. This finding is supported by a study of students majoring in child development that found no gender differences in the degree of violence sensitivity toward children (Tuncay & Türkmen, 2022). Studies with teachers (Gülbahçe, 2018) and candidate teachers (Kula & Akbulut, 2020) have revealed a gender-specific difference in sensitivity to child violence, with women showing higher levels of sensitivity than men, contradicting the findings of this research. A study conducted by Gemiksiz et al. (2019) found that the sensitivity to child violence of female and male students of the faculty of education was similar, but differed according to grade level, with students in the second grade being more sensitive than those in the fourth grade. PE candidate teachers' violence sensitivity toward children does not vary by grade level, possibly because of their positive views and beliefs about children and the teaching profession before entering the department and because the teacher training program does not impact these views and beliefs (Brown, 1992; Yong, 1995).

The study found no correlation between PE candidate teachers' liking of children and their sensitivity to violence toward children. Although there has been little research into the relationship between these two variables, similar themes have been the subject of discussion. In one of these studies, Demir Acar and Yilmaz Bingol (2022) examined whether there was a relationship between liking children and identifying the symptoms and risks of child abuse and neglect among child development majors. Researchers discovered no difference in the level of liking for children and the identification of symptoms and risks of child abuse and neglect by gender or grade level variables. They discovered a high level of liking for children and the identification of symptoms and risks of child abuse and neglect among child development majors, which is consistent with the findings of the current study. Researchers have also found that child development majors' liking levels for children did not predict their ability to identify the symptoms and risks of child abuse and neglect. Kasapoğlu and Akyol (2012) examined the relationship between preschool teachers' liking for children and their attitudes toward children's rights in a related study. The findings showed a relationship between candidate teachers' attitudes toward children's rights and their level of liking for children, which predicted their attitudes toward children's rights. Candidate teachers have deep-rooted and strong beliefs, expectations, and values about education and children before entering the teacher training program, which is extremely difficult to change during the teacher training process (Geisler, 2017; Griffin & Combs, 2000; Romar & Frisk, 2017; Templin & Schempp, 1989). The opinions and beliefs of pre-career teachers based on these non-educational experiences are more

important and effective than those of formal teacher-training programs (Anderson & Anderson, 1995). According to research on the subject, a profound personal commitment to the welfare of children reinforces and protects educators' professional responsibilities (Crosson Tower, 2003). These strong belief systems are believed to be the primary source of the fact that candidate teachers' level of liking for children and their sensitivity toward violence against children are unrelated to one another.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

While the findings of this study show that the level of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children of PE candidate teachers do not vary by gender and grade level, the findings are positive concerning the fact that the level of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children do not vary by gender and grade level. However, the fact that the grade level of the teacher candidates made no difference in terms of their liking children and sensitivity to violence against children can be interpreted as meaning that there was no content in the courses taken in the PE teacher training program that affected the level of liking for children or their sensitivity to child violence.

Although the lack of a relationship between the level of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children has been presented in the literature as a promising finding owing to the high level of liking for children and violence sensitivity toward children in the sample group with similar characteristics in terms of age, culture, and field of study, the relationship between the two variables was not as expected. The simple linear relationship for this finding is believed to be more complex than that estimated in this study.

This study had several potential limitations that should be considered. The primary limitations of this study were the small sample size and sampling processes, both of which might have introduced sampling bias. The sample size was quite small, and, as a result, the findings may not be fully representative or generalizable. It is important to note that this study specifically focused on candidate PE teachers from a single university and department in Turkey. One important drawback is the reliance on convenience sampling, which is a nonprobability sampling method. This limitation arises from the fact that convenience sampling involves selecting individuals who are readily available and accessible, rather than using a random or stratified approach. As a result, the findings derived from convenience sampling may not be generalizable to a broader population, and caution should be exercised when interpreting the results. The researchers had to determine the sample size and selection method based on

various limitations encountered. These limitations include a restricted budget and insufficient time to reach candidate PE teachers. Owing to these challenges, future researchers must carefully consider these constraints when designing a study sample size and selection process. The cross-sectional design of our study limits our ability to establish causality, highlighting the need for future longitudinal research. This approach is essential to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships identified in our study.

In addition, the scarcity of existing studies on this topic within the field of PE underscores the need for further research to fully explore and validate our findings. The research findings indicate the need for further investigation in this specific field, using the same set of variables or those that are closely related. This will help to expand our understanding and provide more comprehensive insights into this subject matter. As this research relies on the accounts provided by the participants regarding the topic, it is important to consider that the genuine perspectives of PE candidate teachers may not have been accurately represented. Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge the potential presence of response bias, which may have influenced the study outcomes. In future research, it is essential to conduct studies that go beyond relying solely on participant self-reporting. By incorporating qualitative methods or employing mixed designs, researchers can gain a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the subject being investigated. This approach enables a more thorough exploration of the research topic and contributes to the robustness of our findings.

Even though this research found no significant difference in the levels of liking for children and the violence sensitivity toward children among PE candidate teachers based on their gender and grade levels, it is heartening to note that they harbor positive feelings towards children and demonstrate sensitivity towards the issue of sensitivity toward violence against a child. The study results revealed that the grade level of PE candidate teachers across different grade levels did not show any noticeable impact on their liking for children or sensitivity to the issue of violence against them. As a result, it is recommended that teacher preparation programs modify their curricula to enhance the qualifications and positive perspectives of candidate teachers on these critical issues. Based on the results of this research, it is suggested that those responsible for designing the program should enhance course content in a manner that promotes heightened awareness among candidate teachers regarding issues of liking children and violence sensitivity toward them. PE candidate teachers should focus on ensuring a consistent approach across all grades. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing candidate teachers' liking of their students and their sensitivity to violence toward them, it is

important to employ qualitative research methods. This approach will facilitate a deep exploration of the reasons behind these attributes, while also examining why they are not influenced by gender or grade levels.

The primary objective of future research should be to replicate this study in a variety of populations to ensure that the results are more representative and generalizable. This will contribute to a better understanding of the broader impact and implications of the findings of this study. The scope of this study was confined to students enrolled in the PE teacher education department. Future research should replicate the study by involving candidate teachers who have graduated from various disciplines within sports sciences faculties, such as coaching, sports management, and recreation. Including those who have earned the qualification to become PE teachers through certification programs would also be valuable.

Ethics Committee Approval

Ethics Committee: Mersin University, The Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee

Ethical Approval Date: 12/01/2022

Ethical Approval Number: 09/02/2022-17

Author Contributions

All stages of this study were equally contributed to by both authors.

Conflict of Interest

All authors have no conflicts of interest.

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