

## Attitudes of Sport Sciences Students Toward the Use of Humour in Education

Zekai ÇAKIR<sup>1†</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, Bayburt Üniversitesi, Bayburt, Türkiye

### Research Article

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### Abstract

This study examines pre-service physical education teachers' attitudes toward using humour in education based on various demographic variables. Significant differences were found according to participants' gender, level of physical activity, daily use of humour, family humour climate, academic department, and year of study. Data were analyzed using SPSS 27 through t-tests, ANOVA, and Cohen's d. The reliability of the attitude scale was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of .842. The findings indicate that female participants showed more positive attitudes than males. Likewise, individuals who exercise regularly, use humour in daily life and were raised in urban environments exhibited more favourable attitudes toward educational humour. Those interested in team sports also demonstrated more positive attitudes than individual sports participants. A clear trend was observed in which attitudes improved as academic levels increased. These results highlight humour's pedagogical value in the classroom, including enhancing attention, reducing anxiety, improving motivation, and strengthening interaction. Therefore, teacher education programs should integrate content aimed at the ethical and constructive use of humour. The study concludes that humour is a multifaceted instructional tool influenced by individual and contextual factors.

**Keywords:** Educational humour, Sport, Student attitudes, Classroom climate

## Spor Bilimleri Öğrencilerinin Eğitimde Mizah Kullanımına Yönelik Tutumları

### Öz

Bu araştırma, Beden eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının eğitimde mizah kullanımına yönelik tutumlarını çeşitli demografik değişkenler doğrultusunda incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmaya katılan öğretmen adaylarının cinsiyet, spor yapma durumu, mizah kullanma alışkanlığı, aile ortamındaki mizah algısı, öğrenim gördükleri bölüm ve sınıf düzeyine göre tutumlarında anlamlı farklılıklar tespit edilmiştir. Veriler SPSS 27 programında t-testi, ANOVA ve Cohen's d analizleri ile değerlendirilmiştir. Ölçeğin Cronbach's Alpha katsayısı .802'dir. Bulgular, kadın öğretmen adaylarının mizaha yönelik tutumlarının erkeklere kıyasla daha olumlu olduğunu; düzenli spor yapan, mizahı günlük yaşamında kullanan ve şehir merkezinde büyümüş bireylerin ise eğitsel mizahı daha olumlu değerlendirdiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, takım sporlarına ilgi duyan bireylerin bireysel sporlarla ilgilenenlere göre mizaha karşı daha yüksek tutum sergiledikleri bulunmuştur. Öğrenim düzeyi ilerledikçe mizaha yönelik tutumlarda artış gözlemlenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, mizahın sınıf içi öğrenme süreçlerinde dikkat çekme, kaygı azaltma, motivasyonu artırma ve etkileşimi güçlendirme gibi önemli pedagojik işlevler üstlendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, öğretmen adaylarının mizahı etik, duyarlı ve yapıcı biçimde kullanabilmeleri için formasyon programlarında mizah odaklı içeriklere yer verilmesi önerilmektedir. Araştırma, mizahın bireysel farklılıklarla şekillenen çok boyutlu bir öğretim aracı olduğunu vurgulayarak, eğitimde mizah kullanımına yönelik daha kapsamlı çalışmaların gerekliliğine işaret etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eğitimde mizah, Spor, Öğrenci tutumları, Sınıf iklimi

<sup>†</sup> Corresponding Author: Zekai Çakır E-mail: [zekaicakir@gmail.com](mailto:zekaicakir@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

Humour is regarded as an important social indicator reflecting society's cultural fabric. A society's sense of humour is closely intertwined with its cultural sophistication and core social values. Historically, disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, literature, and sociology have approached humour not merely as a form of entertainment but as a powerful medium for understanding interpersonal communication, social structures, and human behaviour.

In the context of literature, humour is often characterised by elements of lightness, absurdity, pleasure, and joy, as well as the perception of the comical or the illogical (Loizou & Recchia, 2019; Martin & Ford, 2018). Within this framework, Ruch (2008) suggests that incongruities between objects, events, and expectations can render a situation humorous. Meyer (2000), on the other hand, classifies the primary sources of humour into three categories: the need for relief, the experience of incongruity, and the sense of superiority. These approaches indicate that humour possesses a multilayered structure operating at both individual and societal levels, revealing its complex nature as a cultural and communicative phenomenon.

This illustrates that humour functions not only at an individual level but also at cultural and societal levels. Despite varying definitions, scholars have long acknowledged humour as an effective pedagogical tool within educational contexts (Berk, 2013; Martin, 2007; Zhou & Choi, 2025). Freud (1905/1960) classified humour into two fundamental types: tendentious and nontendentious. While nontendentious humour encompasses harmless wordplays that do not target any individual or group, tendentious humour is inherently aggressive, as it rests on the denigration or ridicule of others. To elucidate this seemingly paradoxical relationship between humour and aggression, Graham et al. (1992) proposed three major theoretical frameworks: superiority, incongruity, and relief/arousal. Furthermore, the dispositional theory provides additional explanatory value in understanding the underlying mechanisms of aggressive humour.

These theoretical perspectives contribute significantly to understanding how and why humour is used. In particular, within contexts such as sports journalism, humour often manifests as disparagement humour, characterised by the creation of binary oppositions between “winners and losers” or “mockers and the mocked” (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976; Zillmann & Bryant, 1991).

Building on these theoretical perspectives, the role of humour in educational settings has increasingly become a focal point of academic inquiry in recent years (Zhou & Choi, 2025). Within the teaching–learning process, humour is regarded not merely as a source of amusement but an effective pedagogical instrument that enhances student engagement, sustains attention, and fosters a positive learning atmosphere.

In the specific context of sport sciences faculties, humour extends beyond theoretical instruction and contributes meaningfully to the learning process within practical sport-related activities (Judge et al., 2024; Ghorbani et al., 2025). The literature frequently emphasises that humour serves to maintain students' interest, render the learning process more enjoyable, and

strengthen classroom interaction (Banas et al., 2011; Martin & Ford, 2018; Neff & Dewaele, 2023; Ngai et al., 2025).

The function of humour becomes even more pronounced in practical sport courses. Humour may enhance students' motivation during training sessions, support group interaction, and alleviate learning-related anxiety, thereby creating a more relaxed and receptive learning environment (Dakwo et al., 2023; Garner, 2006; Torok et al., 2004). Empirical research in sport pedagogy and coaching similarly indicates that humour plays an important social role in sport settings by shaping group interaction, reinforcing social order, and regulating relationships between coaches and athletes (Edwards & Jones, 2018; Schei et al., 2021). In this respect, humour can be regarded as a pedagogical tool that supports both cognitive and affective learning processes in practical sport-based instruction..

Humour can play a facilitative role in learning by strengthening relationships between learners and facilitators and creating a safer learning environment (Hovelynck & Peeters, 2003). Findings suggest that humour contributes to a favourable learning climate, reduces stress, and stimulates creative thinking (Jeder, 2015). By mitigating anxiety in the classroom environment, humour helps students develop more positive attitudes toward learning (Martin & Ford, 2018).

Students' comprehension of instructional content is directly associated with their ability to sustain attention and with the support of their intrinsic motivation; in this process, humour serves as a crucial facilitating mechanism. A range of studies has shown that humour enhances students' attention and motivation, thereby strengthening the retention and durability of learning (Wanzer et al., 2006; Ziv, 1988). Within disciplines that require physical engagement—such as physical education—humour has been found to promote both physical and cognitive participation. Students who perceive their instructors as frequent humour users report higher engagement and motivation (Gorham & Christophel, 1990). Likewise, humour has been demonstrated to reduce anxiety and foster a more relaxed and receptive learning environment (Berk, 2013; Frymier & Shulman, 1995; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983).

Student evaluations also indicate that humour is generally perceived in a positive light. Learners report that humour increases their attention during class, contributes meaningfully to the learning process, and helps them develop more favourable attitudes toward their instructors (Bakar & Kumar, 2023).

Humour offers multifaceted benefits for both students and teachers. Using humour, teachers can establish warmer and more effective relationships with their students, fostering a favourable classroom climate. However, the effective use of humour requires teachers to act consciously and sensitively, considering students' developmental characteristics, ages, and individual differences. Humour should not merely serve an entertainment purpose but function as a strategic tool that supports learning and fosters a constructive classroom atmosphere (Banas et al., 2011). When applied appropriately, humour bridges teacher and student, strengthening the educational process (Garner, 2006).

Nevertheless, the inappropriate or excessive use of humour may pose certain risks. Ill-timed or unsuitable humorous expressions can diminish students' interest in the course or

undermine the seriousness of the academic content. In particular, humour targeting students' physical or personal characteristics may harm self-esteem and decrease learning motivation. Therefore, although humour in the classroom often reflects individual teaching styles, it must be guided by a strong sense of pedagogical responsibility (Garner, 2006; Torok et al., 2004; Wanzer et al., 2010).

In recent years, research examining pre-service teachers' attitudes toward using humour in educational contexts has noticed a noticeable increase. This growing body of work suggests that such attitudes may be crucial in developing humour-based instructional models and shaping contemporary pedagogical practices (Bieg & Dresel, 2018). Pre-service teachers' perceptions of humour can directly influence the overall quality of education, the nature of teacher–student relationships, and the dynamics of the classroom environment (Banas et al., 2011; Garner, 2006; Wanzer et al., 2010; Zhou & Choi, 2025). However, the effective use of humour as a learning tool is not solely dependent on pedagogical competence. Humour is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by cultural norms, social values, and contextual dynamics. Within the discipline of sport sciences-where body language, physical interaction, and teamwork play a central role-the perception and application of humour may differ considerably from those observed in other academic domains. Therefore, when examining pre-service teachers' attitudes toward humour, it is essential to consider the influence of cultural and contextual factors to ensure a more accurate and meaningful interpretation of the research findings.

Although humour is widely recognised as a valuable pedagogical tool that facilitates learning, reduces anxiety, and strengthens teacher–student relationships, research investigating pre-service teachers' attitudes toward using humour in education remains limited. In particular, the scarcity of comprehensive studies focusing on sport sciences students has led to an incomplete understanding of humour's role in learning environments grounded in physical activity. Indeed, research specifically addressing the Faculties of Sport Sciences students is remarkably sparse. However, humour is likely to assume a distinctive role in shaping classroom dynamics and learning experiences in such programs, where both theoretical and practical courses coexist.

Furthermore, previous studies have predominantly concentrated on general teacher education students or learners from other academic disciplines, leaving the perceptions of sport sciences students toward using humour in education neglected, mainly in the literature. Addressing this gap is particularly important, as these students represent future educators who will carry humour-based pedagogical practices into classroom instruction and applied sporting contexts.

Accordingly, the primary aim of this study is to examine in detail the attitudes of pre-service teachers enrolled in the Faculties of Sport Sciences toward the use of humour in educational settings. The research considers a range of demographic variables, including gender, year of study, academic department, family humour climate, place of residence (village, town, or city), and income level. In doing so, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors shaping attitudes toward humour within the context of sport

sciences and to provide insights that may inform the design of more effective teacher education programs.

In line with this aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) Do Sport Sciences students' attitudes toward using humour in education differ according to gender, academic department, income level, and place of residence?
- (2) How do these demographic variables influence students' attitudes toward the educational use of humour?

Within this framework, the present study aims to close the existing literature gap by investigating humour's pedagogical functions within the context of Sport Sciences education.

## **METHOD**

This section provides a detailed account of the analytical procedures applied to the data obtained in the quantitative phase of the study. It also offers a comprehensive explanation of the research model, the study group, and the data collection processes

### **Research Model**

This study used a comparative relational survey model, aligned with the general survey design, to determine pre-service teachers' attitudes toward using humour in education based on various dependent and independent variables. The general survey model is used to obtain a broad understanding of a population composed of a large number of elements by examining either the entire population or a representative sample drawn from it (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013; Karasar, 2007). This model was chosen because it allows for the identification of patterns and differences in attitudes across demographic variables without manipulating the research environment.

### **Research Group**

Participants were recruited through a criterion-based voluntary convenience sampling approach. The predetermined inclusion criteria were being enrolled in the Faculty of Sport Sciences and agreeing to participate voluntarily in the study. Data were collected online via Google Forms, and participation was based on informed consent. Therefore, the sampling procedure should be interpreted as voluntary and non-random rather than as a random selection process. The research sample consisted of 466 students enrolled in the Faculty of Sport Sciences. Among the participants, 44.0% (n = 205) were male and 56.0% (n = 261) were female, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. When examined by department, 25.3% (n = 118) of the students were enrolled in Physical Education and Sports, 22.1% (n = 103) in Sports Management, 21.7% (n = 101) in Coaching Education, and 30.9% (n = 144) in Recreation programs.

Participants also demonstrated diversity in terms of household income level and residential background. These demographic variations allowed for a multidimensional examination of students' attitudes toward using humour in education (see Table 2).

### **Ethical Approval**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Bayburt University Rectorate Ethics Committee, dated 07 February 2023, with decision number 35 and document number 118171.

### **Data Collection Tools**

The data collection instrument used in the study consists of two sections: the Personal Information Form and the Attitude Scale Toward the Use of Humour in Education.

**Personal Information Form:** Designed to meet the study's objectives, this form gathers demographic information, including age, income level, marital status, educational background, and duration of employment within the institution.

**Attitude Scale Toward the Use of Humour in Education (ASTUHE):** The Attitudes Toward the Use of Humour in Education Scale employed in this study was developed by Balta (2016). The scale consists of 17 items and comprises three subdimensions: Perceiving Humour as Necessary in Education, Impact on Language and Teaching, and Contribution to Classroom Management. The original scale's overall reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was reported as .925. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) results indicated a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of .937 and a statistically significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $p < .001$ ). The three-factor structure accounted for 60.47% of the total variance, and the Cronbach's alpha values for the subdimensions ranged between .757 and .889. These findings demonstrate that the scale is a valid and reliable measurement instrument. The current study's reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) obtained from the sample was .802, further supporting the instrument's internal consistency. In the current study, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) obtained from the sample was .802, further supporting the internal consistency of the instrument.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study were collected online via Google Forms in November 2023. During the design phase of the form, voluntary participation was ensured, and all questions were designated as mandatory fields to prevent missing data. Furthermore, system-based restrictions were implemented to prevent participants from submitting the form more than once, thereby enhancing the reliability and integrity of the dataset.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data collected from participants were transferred into SPSS version 27, and a dataset was constructed for analysis. Erroneous and incomplete data within the dataset were cleaned and removed. The reliability analysis of the scale yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .802, indicating a high level of internal consistency (Büyüköztürk, 2010; Pallant, 2005; Tavşancıl, 2006). The normality of the data was assessed by examining skewness and

kurtosis values. Upon confirming that the assumption of normality was met, parametric tests were employed.

In addition to descriptive statistics, an independent samples t-test was used to compare continuous quantitative data between two independent groups. Cohen's *d* values were calculated to interpret effect sizes. Cohen's *d* provides an estimate of the standardized difference between means, indicating how many standard deviations are apart from the group means (Büyüköztürk, 2010). Regardless of its sign, the value of Cohen's *d* can assume any numerical value and is interpreted as follows: a value of 0.2 indicates a small effect, 0.5 a medium effect, and 0.8 or higher a significant effect (Büyüköztürk, 2010; Büyüköztürk et al., 2013; Cohen, 1992; Field, 2009; Green & Salkind, 2013; Pallant, 2005; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008), for comparisons involving more than two groups, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted.

**Table 1.** Skewness and kurtosis values of the scale scores administered to participants

| Scale / Subscale | n   | M     | Sum     | Min. | Max. | Std. | Skewness | Std.S | Kurtosis | Std.K |
|------------------|-----|-------|---------|------|------|------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| ASTUHE           | 466 | 3,485 | 1624,09 | 1    | 5    | ,631 | -,517    |       | 1,212    |       |
| PHNE             | 466 | 3,494 | 1628,06 | 1    | 5    | ,954 | -,604    | ,113  | ,346     | ,226  |
| ELI              | 466 | 3,480 | 1621,97 | 1    | 5    | ,635 | -,734    |       | 1,828    |       |
| CCM              | 466 | 3,756 | 1750,47 | 1    | 5    | ,832 | -,373    |       | -,247    |       |

ASTUHE: Attitude Scale Toward the Use of Humour in Education, PHNE: Perceiving Humour as Necessary in Education, ELI: Effect on Language and Instruction, CCM: Contribution to Classroom Management

In Table 1, the skewness and kurtosis values for ASTUHE and its subdimensions (PHNE, ELI, CCM) generally fell within the acceptable range. While the kurtosis value of the ELI subdimension (1.828) slightly exceeded the  $\pm 1.5$  threshold, it remained well within the broader  $\pm 2.0$  criterion suggested by George and Mallery (2024). Thus, the data can be considered approximately normally distributed, supporting the appropriateness of parametric tests (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

## FINDINGS

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of participants regarding their attitudes toward the use of humour in education

| Variable                                            |                               | <i>f</i> | %    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|------|
| Gender                                              | Male                          | 205      | 44,0 |
|                                                     | Female                        | 261      | 56,0 |
| Which department are you enrolled in?               | Physical Education and Sports | 118      | 25,3 |
|                                                     | Sports Management             | 103      | 22,1 |
|                                                     | Coaching                      | 101      | 21,7 |
|                                                     | Recreation                    | 144      | 30,9 |
| How would you describe your household income level? | High                          | 121      | 26,0 |
|                                                     | Moderate                      | 141      | 30,3 |
|                                                     | Low                           | 204      | 43,8 |
| What type of area did you grow up in?               | City                          | 187      | 40,1 |
|                                                     | Town                          | 175      | 37,6 |
|                                                     | Village                       | 104      | 22,3 |
|                                                     | Total                         | 466      | 100  |

A total of 466 students participated in the study. Of these, 44.0% (n = 205) were male and 56.0% (n = 261) were female. Regarding their enrolled departments, 25.3% were in Physical Education and Sports (n = 118), 22.1% in Sports Management (n = 103), 21.7% in Coaching Education (n = 101), and 30.9% in Recreation (n = 144).

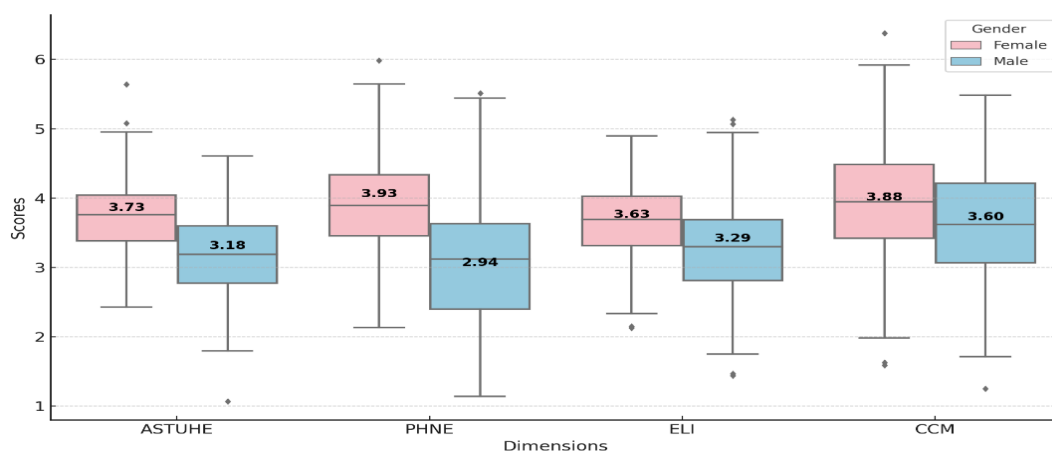
In terms of household income, 26.0% (n = 121) described their income level as high, 30.3% (n = 141) as moderate, and 43.8% (n = 204) as low. Finally, regarding the type of area in which participants were raised, 40.1% (n = 187) reported growing up in a city, 37.6% (n = 175) in a town, and 22.3% (n = 104) in a village.

**Table 3.** Comparison of ASTUHE total and subscale scores by gender (Independent Samples t-Test)

| Dimension | Variable | n   | M    | SD    | Cohen's d | t      | Sd      | p     |
|-----------|----------|-----|------|-------|-----------|--------|---------|-------|
| ASTUHE    | Female   | 261 | 3,73 | 0,496 | 0,57      | -5,207 | 759,855 | ,001* |
|           | Male     | 205 | 3,18 | 0,652 |           |        |         |       |
| PHNE      | Female   | 261 | 3,93 | 0,667 | 0,819     | -4,389 | 760,1   | ,001* |
|           | Male     | 205 | 2,94 | 0,978 |           |        |         |       |
| ELI       | Female   | 261 | 3,63 | 0,519 | 0,614     | -4,72  | 759,54  | ,001* |
|           | Male     | 205 | 3,29 | 0,714 |           |        |         |       |
| CCM       | Female   | 261 | 3,88 | 0,783 | 0,821     | -2,925 | 751,67  | ,001* |
|           | Male     | 205 | 3,60 | 0,868 |           |        |         |       |

\*p<0.05, ASTUHE: Attitude Scale Toward the Use of Humour in Education, PHNE: Perceiving Humour as Necessary in Education, ELI: Effect on Language and Instruction, CCM: Contribution to Classroom Management

As presented in Table 3, statistically significant differences were observed in the total ASTUHE scores and their subdimensions according to gender. Female students obtained a higher overall mean score (M = 3.73) than their male counterparts (M = 3.18), and this difference corresponded to a medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.57). When subdimensions were examined, the PHNE scores of female students (M = 3.93) were significantly higher than those of male students (M = 2.94), reflecting a large effect size (d = 0.82). Similarly, in the ELI subdimension, females (M = 3.63) scored higher than males (M = 3.29), indicating a medium-to-large effect size (d = 0.61). Finally, within the CCM subdimension, females (M = 3.88) again outperformed males (M = 3.60), with the difference demonstrating a large effect size (d = 0.82). In summary, female students exhibited significantly more positive attitudes toward using humour in education than male students-both on the overall ASTUHE scale and across all subdimensions.



**Figure 1.** Box plot of ASTUHE total and sub-dimension scores by gender

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of ASTUHE total and subscale scores by gender.

**Table 4.** ANOVA Results for participants' attitudes toward the use of humour in education according to academic department

|        | Groups                                       | n   | M    | SD    | Source of Variance | SS      | df  | MS    | F     | p      | $\eta^2$ | Signification     |
|--------|----------------------------------------------|-----|------|-------|--------------------|---------|-----|-------|-------|--------|----------|-------------------|
| ASTUHE | Sports Management <sup>(1)</sup>             | 103 | 3,42 | 0,681 | B.Groups           | 6,573   | 3   | 2,191 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Physical Education and Sports <sup>(2)</sup> | 118 | 3,34 | 0,690 | W.Groups           | 179,060 | 462 | 0,388 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Recreation <sup>(3)</sup>                    | 144 | 3,52 | 0,567 | Total              | 185,634 | 465 |       | 5,653 | 0,001* | 0,04     | 4-1,2             |
|        | Coaching <sup>(4)</sup>                      | 101 | 3,67 | 0,549 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Total                                        | 466 | 3,49 | 0,632 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |
| PHNE   | Sports Management <sup>(1)</sup>             | 103 | 3,34 | 0,936 | B.Groups           | 11,721  | 3   | 3,907 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Physical Education and Sports <sup>(2)</sup> | 118 | 3,39 | 1,179 | W.Groups           | 411,519 | 462 | 0,891 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Recreation <sup>(3)</sup>                    | 144 | 3,49 | 0,864 | Total              | 423,240 | 465 |       | 4,386 | 0,005* | 0,03     | 4-1,2             |
|        | Coaching <sup>(4)</sup>                      | 101 | 3,78 | 0,727 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Total                                        | 466 | 3,49 | 0,954 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |
| ELI    | Sports Management <sup>(1)</sup>             | 103 | 3,37 | 0,606 | B.Groups           | 3,628   | 3   | 1,209 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Physical Education and Sports <sup>(2)</sup> | 118 | 3,40 | 0,738 | W.Groups           | 183,990 | 462 | 0,398 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Recreation <sup>(3)</sup>                    | 144 | 3,56 | 0,555 | Total              | 187,618 | 465 |       | 3,037 | 0,029* | 0,019    | 4-1,2             |
|        | Coaching <sup>(4)</sup>                      | 101 | 3,57 | 0,622 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Total                                        | 466 | 3,48 | 0,635 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |
| CCM    | Sports Management <sup>(1)</sup>             | 103 | 3,58 | 0,647 | B.Groups           | 17,666  | 3   | 5,889 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Physical Education and Sports <sup>(2)</sup> | 118 | 3,83 | 0,732 | W.Groups           | 304,845 | 462 | 0,660 |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Recreation <sup>(3)</sup>                    | 144 | 3,60 | 0,914 | Total              | 322,511 | 465 |       | 8,925 | 0      | 0,05     | 2-1,3;<br>4-1,2,3 |
|        | Coaching <sup>(4)</sup>                      | 101 | 4,07 | 0,894 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |
|        | Total                                        | 466 | 3,76 | 0,833 |                    |         |     |       |       |        |          |                   |

\*p<0.05, ASTUHE: Attitude Scale Toward the Use of Humour in Education, PHNE: Perceiving Humour as Necessary in Education, ELI: Effect on Language and Instruction, CCM: Contribution to Classroom Management

As shown in Table 4, statistically significant differences were observed in the total ASTUHE scores and its subdimensions according to students' academic departments ( $p < .05$ ). For the total ASTUHE score, students enrolled in the Coaching Education program ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) scored significantly higher than those in Sports Management ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) and Physical Education and Sports Teaching ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ),  $F(3, 462) = 5.653$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ .

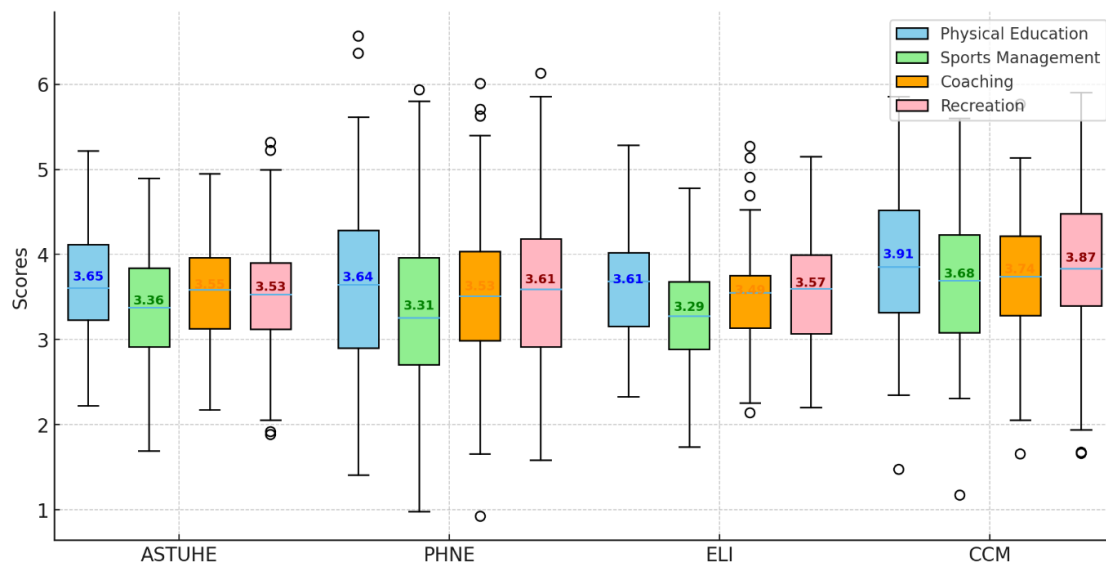
Similarly, in the PHNE subdimension, Coaching Education students ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) scored significantly higher than students in Sports Management ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) and Physical Education and Sports Teaching ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ),  $F(3, 462) = 4.386$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . No significant post-hoc difference was indicated between Coaching Education and Recreation students.

For the ELI subdimension, Coaching Education students ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) scored significantly higher than those in Sports Management ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) and Physical Education and Sports Teaching ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ),  $F(3, 462) = 3.037$ ,  $p = .029$ ,  $\eta^2 = .019$ . Although Recreation students had a similar mean score ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ), the post-hoc results did not indicate a significant difference involving the Recreation group.

The largest difference emerged in the CCM subdimension. Coaching Education students ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) scored significantly higher than students in Sports Management, Physical Education and Sports Teaching, and Recreation. In addition, students in Physical Education and Sports Teaching ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) scored significantly higher than those

in Sports Management ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) and Recreation ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ),  $F(3, 462) = 8.925$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ .

Overall, the findings indicate that attitudes toward using humour in education differed significantly according to academic department. Coaching Education students generally reported higher attitudes, particularly in the total ASTUHE score, PHNE, ELI, and CCM dimensions; however, the interpretation of these differences was based strictly on the post-hoc comparisons reported in Table 4.



**Figure 2.** Box Plot of ASTUHE Total and Sub-Dimension Scores by Department of Study

Figure 2 displays box plots representing the variation of ASTUHE scores across academic departments.

**Table 5.** ANOVA Results for participants' attitudes toward the use of humour in education based on their income level (ASTUHE Total Score and Subscales: PHNE, ELI, CCM)

|        | Variable              | n   | M    | SD    | Source of Variance | SS      | df  | MS    | F     | p     | $\eta^2$ | Signification |
|--------|-----------------------|-----|------|-------|--------------------|---------|-----|-------|-------|-------|----------|---------------|
| ASTUHE | High <sup>A</sup>     | 130 | 3,47 | 0,673 | B. Groups          | 0,049   | 2   | 0,024 | 0,061 | 0,941 | 0,00     | -             |
|        | Moderate <sup>B</sup> | 145 | 3,48 | 0,628 | W.Groups           | 185,585 | 463 | 0,401 |       |       |          |               |
|        | Low <sup>C</sup>      | 191 | 3,50 | 0,609 | Total              | 185,634 | 465 |       |       |       |          |               |
|        | Total                 | 466 | 3,49 | 0,632 |                    |         |     |       |       |       |          |               |
| PHNE   | High <sup>A</sup>     | 130 | 3,46 | 0,930 | B. Groups          | 0,345   | 2   | 0,173 | 0,189 | 0,828 | 0,00     | -             |
|        | Moderate <sup>B</sup> | 145 | 3,53 | 0,930 | W.Groups           | 422,895 | 463 | 0,913 |       |       |          |               |
|        | Low <sup>C</sup>      | 191 | 3,48 | 0,991 | Total              | 423,240 | 465 |       |       |       |          |               |
|        | Total                 | 466 | 3,49 | 0,954 |                    |         |     |       |       |       |          |               |
| ELI    | High <sup>A</sup>     | 130 | 3,43 | 0,642 | B. Groups          | 0,515   | 2   | 0,257 | 0,637 | 0,529 | 0,00     | -             |
|        | Moderate <sup>B</sup> | 145 | 3,48 | 0,646 | W.Groups           | 187,103 | 463 | 0,404 |       |       |          |               |
|        | Low <sup>C</sup>      | 191 | 3,51 | 0,624 | Total              | 187,618 | 465 |       |       |       |          |               |
|        | Total                 | 466 | 3,48 | 0,635 |                    |         |     |       |       |       |          |               |
| CCM    | High <sup>A</sup>     | 130 | 3,78 | 0,866 | B. Groups          | 0,235   | 2   | 0,117 | 0,169 | 0,845 | 0,00     | -             |
|        | Moderate <sup>B</sup> | 145 | 3,77 | 0,849 | W.Groups           | 322,276 | 463 | 0,696 |       |       |          |               |
|        | Low <sup>C</sup>      | 191 | 3,73 | 0,800 | Total              | 322,511 | 465 |       |       |       |          |               |
|        | Total                 | 466 | 3,76 | 0,833 |                    |         |     |       |       |       |          |               |

\* $p < 0.05$ , ASTUHE: Attitude Scale Toward the Use of Humour in Education, PHNE: Perceiving Humour as Necessary in Education, ELI: Effect on Language and Instruction, CCM: Contribution to Classroom Management

As shown in Table 5, no statistically significant differences were found in the total ASTUHE scores or its subdimensions based on students' income levels ( $p > .05$ ). In terms of

the total ASTUHE score, the mean values of the high-income ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ), middle-income ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ), and low-income groups ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) were nearly identical,  $F(2, 463) = 0.061$ ,  $p = .941$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ .

Similarly, in the PHNE subdimension, no significant differences were observed among the high ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), middle ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), and low ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ) income groups,  $F(2, 463) = 0.189$ ,  $p = .828$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ .

In the ELI subdimension, the mean scores were also highly similar across income levels (high:  $M = 3.43$ ; middle:  $M = 3.48$ ; low:  $M = 3.51$ ), indicating no statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 463) = 0.637$ ,  $p = .529$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ .

A comparable pattern was found in the CCM subdimension, where the high-income ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ), middle-income ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ), and low-income ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) groups did not differ significantly,  $F(2, 463) = 0.169$ ,  $p = .845$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ .

In summary, income level had no statistically or practically significant effect on students' attitudes toward using humour in education.

**Table 6.** ANOVA results for participants' attitudes toward the use of humour in education based on their place of residence

|        | Grups                      | n   | $\bar{X}$ | SD    | Source of Variance | KT      | sd  | KO     | F      | p      | $\eta^2$ | Signification |
|--------|----------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|--------------------|---------|-----|--------|--------|--------|----------|---------------|
| ASTUHE | City Center <sup>(a)</sup> | 187 | 3,59      | 0,676 | B. Groups          | 4,649   | 2   | 2,325  | 5,947  | 0,003* | 0,025    | 1-2,3         |
|        | District <sup>(b)</sup>    | 175 | 3,46      | 0,623 | W.Groups           | 180,984 | 463 | 0,391  |        |        |          |               |
|        | Village <sup>(c)</sup>     | 104 | 3,33      | 0,525 | Total              | 185,634 | 465 |        |        |        |          |               |
|        | Total                      | 466 | 3,49      | 0,632 |                    |         |     |        |        |        |          |               |
| PHNE   | City Center <sup>(a)</sup> | 187 | 3,79      | 1,096 | B. Groups          | 26,660  | 2   | 13,330 | 15,562 | 0,000* | 0,06     | 1-2,3         |
|        | District <sup>(b)</sup>    | 175 | 3,30      | 0,784 | W.Groups           | 396,581 | 463 | 0,857  |        |        |          |               |
|        | Village <sup>(c)</sup>     | 104 | 3,29      | 0,802 | Total              | 423,240 | 465 |        |        |        |          |               |
|        | Total                      | 466 | 3,49      | 0,954 |                    |         |     |        |        |        |          |               |
| ELI    | City Center <sup>(a)</sup> | 187 | 3,66      | 0,659 | B. Groups          | 10,519  | 2   | 5,259  | 13,75  | 0,000* | 0,06     | 1-2,3         |
|        | District <sup>(b)</sup>    | 175 | 3,35      | 0,635 | W.Groups           | 177,099 | 463 | 0,383  |        |        |          |               |
|        | Village <sup>(c)</sup>     | 104 | 3,37      | 0,504 | Total              | 187,618 | 465 |        |        |        |          |               |
|        | Total                      | 466 | 3,48      | 0,635 |                    |         |     |        |        |        |          |               |
| CCM    | City Center <sup>(a)</sup> | 187 | 3,89      | 0,816 | B. Groups          | 14,772  | 2   | 7,386  | 11,113 | 0,000* | 0,05     | 1-3;<br>2-3   |
|        | District <sup>(b)</sup>    | 175 | 3,81      | 0,792 | W.Groups           | 307,739 | 463 | 0,665  |        |        |          |               |
|        | Village <sup>(c)</sup>     | 104 | 3,43      | 0,853 | Total              | 322,511 | 465 |        |        |        |          |               |
|        | Total                      | 466 | 3,76      | 0,833 |                    |         |     |        |        |        |          |               |

\* $p < 0.05$ , ASTUHE: Attitude Scale Toward the Use of Humour in Education, PHNE: Perceiving Humour as Necessary in Education, ELI: Effect on Language and Instruction, CCM: Contribution to Classroom Management

As shown in Table 6, students' attitudes toward the use of humour in education differed significantly according to their place of residence ( $p < .05$ ). In the total ASTUHE score, students raised in urban areas ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) reported significantly higher mean scores than those living in districts ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) and villages ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ),  $F(2, 463) = 5.947$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta^2 = .025$ . This finding corresponds to a small effect size.

In the PHNE subdimension, urban students ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) scored significantly higher than both district ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) and village students ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ),  $F(2, 463) = 15.562$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ , indicating a medium effect size.

A similar pattern was observed in the ELI subdimension, where students residing in city centers ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ) obtained higher mean scores than those from districts ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ) and villages ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ),  $F(2, 463) = 13.750$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . This represents a medium level of practical significance.

In the CCM subdimension, students from urban ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) and district settings ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) scored significantly higher than those from rural areas ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ),  $F(2, 463) = 11.113$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ , suggesting a small-to-medium effect size.

Overall, the level of urbanisation appears to significantly shape students' attitudes toward using humour in educational contexts. Specifically, students raised in urban environments tend to evaluate the pedagogical functions of humour more positively than their peers from semi-urban or rural backgrounds.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the attitudes of students of the Faculty of Sport Sciences toward the use of humour in education differed according to several demographic variables. In particular, gender emerged as a meaningful factor, with female students displaying more positive attitudes toward humour in education than male students. This difference was observed not only in the overall attitude score but also in the subdimensions related to perceiving humour as necessary in education, its effect on language and instruction, and its contribution to classroom management. These findings suggest that female pre-service teachers may perceive humour as a more functional pedagogical tool for strengthening classroom interaction, supporting communication, and fostering a positive learning climate. Overall, these results highlight the importance of considering gender differences in the pedagogical use of humour in teacher education contexts.

The findings obtained in this study are consistent with the earlier works of Zillmann and Cantor (1976), who both reported that women tend to find self-deprecating humour more enjoyable. In contrast, they are less likely to appreciate humour that targets others. Similarly, Johnson (1991) and Gallivan (1992) emphasised that perceptions of humour may vary across temporal and cultural contexts. In line with these observations, Yaprak et al. (2018) highlighted that humour styles differ according to gender and other demographic variables. These findings suggest that humour represents a multidimensional construct shaped by individual, social, and cultural factors.

Nevertheless, contradictory evidence also exists in the literature. Altın and Demir (2019) reported significant gender differences in humour styles among university students, with male students scoring higher on affiliative, self-defeating, and overall humour dimensions, whereas Aslan (2006), in a study conducted with secondary school teachers, found no significant gender differences in humour use. Such inconsistencies may be attributed to variations in sample characteristics, educational levels, occupational settings, and cultural contexts. Therefore, gender-related differences in humour appear to be context-dependent rather than universal, varying according to the characteristics of the population under investigation.

From a theoretical perspective, studies grounded in superiority theory (Hobbes, 1651/1996; Morreall, 1983) suggest that humour may function as an expression of power, competence, and dominance, particularly in certain social contexts. Within this framework,

men are often reported to be more likely to use humour in ways associated with status signalling, whereas women tend to employ humour to foster intimacy and strengthen social connectedness. In domains such as sports broadcasting—where direct interpersonal interaction is relatively limited—the lower frequency of humour use among female presenters may indicate that humour is shaped not only by individual preferences but also by contextual and cultural factors.

Moreover, considering that sporting environments provide a fertile ground for the development and expression of humour, it appears consistent that individuals who actively participate in sports display more positive attitudes toward humour (Snyder, 1991).

The present study's findings are also consistent with the broader body of literature emphasising the positive pedagogical functions of humour in educational settings. Humour is strongly associated with enhanced morale, motivation, creativity, and the overall quality of the learning environment, while simultaneously reducing students' anxiety and tension—thereby fostering a greater openness to learning (Safaei et al., 2024; Şahin, 2021). Similarly, within the field of sport psychology, humour has been reported as an effective tool for strengthening client relationships and fostering a more robust therapeutic alliance (Tod et al., 2023).

The present findings further indicate that humour is perceived differently across genders within educational contexts, with these differences being supported by medium-to-large effect sizes. This aligns with recent studies underscoring humour's critical role in enhancing teacher effectiveness and promoting student engagement (Bieg et al., 2022). From a pedagogical standpoint, these results suggest that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward humour may vary according to gender, and that recognising such differences in teacher education program design could enhance instructional effectiveness while fostering stronger classroom cohesion.

Overall, these results highlight the pedagogical significance of cultivating pre-service teachers' awareness of humour's facilitative role in learning processes, as previously emphasised by Bieg et al. (2022) and Banas et al. (2011).

The study revealed that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward using humour in education differed significantly across academic departments. Notably, students in the Coaching Education program ( $M = 3.67$ ) scored higher on the overall ASTUHE scale than those enrolled in Sports Management ( $M = 3.42$ ) and Physical Education and Sports Teaching ( $M = 3.34$ ). This difference, supported by a small-to-moderate effect size ( $\eta^2 = .04$ ), suggests that coaching students hold more positive perceptions of the pedagogical function of humour compared to their peers in other programs. From a pedagogical perspective, this finding indicates that students enrolled in practice-oriented curricula tend to attribute greater value to humour as an instructional tool, emphasising the importance of accounting for disciplinary differences in curriculum design.

Similarly, in the PHNE subscale, Coaching Education students ( $M = 3.78$ ) demonstrated significantly higher mean scores than students in other departments ( $\eta^2 = .03$ ). Although the effect size was small, this finding implies that the inherently interactive and

applied nature of coaching education may contribute to students perceiving humour as an essential and functional component of the teaching–learning process.

In the ELI subscale, students from the Coaching Education ( $M = 3.57$ ) and Recreation ( $M = 3.56$ ) programs demonstrated higher mean scores than those in Sports Management ( $M = 3.37$ ) and Physical Education and Sports Teaching ( $M = 3.40$ ). Although the effect size was small ( $\eta^2 = .019$ ), this result indicates that students enrolled in programs emphasising applied courses tend to perceive humour as more beneficial to linguistic and expressive processes. From an educational standpoint, this finding suggests that the communicative functions of humour become more salient in practice-oriented disciplines, where interpersonal engagement and expressive clarity are integral to instruction.

The most pronounced difference emerged in the CCM subscale. Coaching Education students ( $M = 4.07$ ) scored significantly higher than those in all other departments. Moreover, students in the Physical Education and Sports Teaching program ( $M = 3.83$ ) achieved higher scores than their peers in Sports Management ( $M = 3.58$ ) and Recreation ( $M = 3.60$ ). Supported by a moderate effect size ( $\eta^2 = .05$ ), these results suggest that coaching students perceive humour as a more functional strategy for classroom management—likely due to the high frequency of practical sessions and direct teacher–student interaction within their curriculum. The moderate level of this effect further implies that experiential learning environments may enhance the perceived pedagogical value of humour, potentially leading pre-service teachers to incorporate humour more intentionally in their future instructional practices.

In line with recent findings in educational and sport psychology, the role of humour in fostering resilience, relationship-building, and motivation has been widely documented in the literature (Martin & Ford, 2018; Kuiper et al., 2004; Samson & Gross, 2012; Banas et al., 2011). Overall, the results presented in Table 4 indicate that, although small-to-moderate effect sizes accompany interdepartmental differences, students in Coaching Education consistently exhibit more substantial and more positive attitudes toward using humour in educational settings. In other words, disciplinary orientations shape how students conceptualise and value humour within pedagogical contexts.

In another study, Çelik (2020) reported that students from the Faculties of Sport Sciences exhibited higher levels of humour than conservatory students. This finding suggests that perceptions of humour may vary across academic disciplines. Similar results have been reported in related research. For instance, Şahin (2021), in a study conducted with in-service teachers, noted that teachers consciously employed humour as an instructional tool to capture students' attention, make learning more enjoyable, and sustain engagement. Likewise, Schmidt and Williams (2001) found in their experimental study that students recalled humorous sentences and cartoons at significantly higher rates than non-humorous content. These findings indicate that humour may be associated with cognitive and affective learning dimensions in educational contexts. However, to better understand the nature of this relationship, it would be beneficial to examine students' perceptions of humour across different grade levels.

Regarding the income variable, the results showed no significant differences in students' attitudes toward using humour in education. The mean scores for students in the high-

income group ( $M = 3.47$ ), middle-income group ( $M = 3.48$ ), and low-income group ( $M = 3.50$ ) were remarkably similar. The analysis of variance further confirmed that these differences were statistically insignificant ( $F(2,463) = 0.061$ ,  $p = .941$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ ). This finding suggests that income level has a negligible effect on attitudes toward humour. Within pedagogical contexts, humour tends to be perceived similarly among students regardless of socioeconomic background.

Similar patterns were observed across all subdimensions, indicating that income level did not create any meaningful differences in students' perceptions of humour in education.

The absence of significant differences by income level may be partly attributable to the nature of the measurement procedure. In this study, income level was classified subjectively into low, middle, and high categories based on participants' self-perceptions rather than objective economic indicators. Consequently, reliance on self-reported income estimations may have limited group variability. Furthermore, the participants' relatively homogeneous socio-economic backgrounds may have contributed to the lack of observable income-based distinctions in attitudes toward humour.

These findings suggest that perceptions of humour are shaped less by economic factors and more by cultural norms and social context. The data indicate that although students vary in income level, their perceptions of the pedagogical role of humour remain remarkably similar. Accordingly, humour's facilitative, communicative, and classroom management functions are positively evaluated regardless of socio-economic status. This aligns with recent post-pandemic research highlighting humour as a universal pedagogical tool that enhances learning engagement and instructional effectiveness (Banas et al., 2011). From a practical standpoint, this implies that educators need not adjust their use of humour based on students' economic background, as humour is perceived as a universally accessible and beneficial instructional medium across income groups.

Similarly, Altın and Demir (2019) found no significant differences in humour styles among university students according to age or income level. Çelik (2020) also reported no significant variation in students' humour perception or humour levels based on income status. Consistent with these findings, the present study supports the view that income level is not meaningfully associated with students' humour-related attitudes or perceptions.

As summarised in Table 6, students' attitudes toward the use of humour in education differed according to their place of residence. Students raised in urban environments demonstrated more positive attitudes compared to those from districts and rural areas, suggesting that urbanisation may contribute to perceiving humour as a more functional and integral pedagogical tool in educational settings.

These findings imply that the communicative richness and social diversity characteristic of urban environments may enhance students' awareness of humour's role in learning, expression, and classroom management. In contrast, in more rural contexts, humour may be perceived as less central to pedagogical processes.

Overall, these findings highlight the role of urbanisation as a meaningful factor shaping humour perception. Cultural diversity, communicative intensity, and greater exposure to

various humour forms in urban contexts foster more positive and functional attitudes toward humour. Conversely, in rural environments, where humour may be more closely associated with authority and discipline, students may perceive it as less relevant to pedagogy and classroom engagement.

This finding suggests that perceptions of humour are shaped not only by individual traits but also by the broader socio-cultural environment. Individuals raised in urban contexts appear more inclined to develop open and positive attitudes toward the pedagogical functions of humour. Nevertheless, the impact of humour within the classroom is also contingent upon teachers' approaches and choices. While humour offers considerable pedagogical benefits, its misuse or inappropriate timing can hinder learning. Therefore, employing humour consciously, proportionately, and in accordance with contextual demands is essential for maximising its educational effectiveness.

From a cultural perspective, it becomes evident that perceptions of humour are influenced not only by individual differences but also by social values, socio-cultural norms, and the surrounding cultural context. Recent cross-cultural research underscores the direct association between humour perception, social harmony, and educational climate (Jiang et al., 2019; Neff & Dewaele, 2023; Lu, 2023). Within Turkish culture, for instance, sarcastic or disparaging humour may be perceived as undermining authority and interpersonal respect. Consequently, humour might be more readily viewed as conflicting with discipline and classroom order in rural regions.

The higher mean scores observed among students raised in urban centres—with effect sizes ( $\eta^2$ ) ranging from .025 to .06—further support the notion that urban environments' cultural diversity and communicative density characteristics foster the perception of humour as a more functional and constructive pedagogical tool.

The existing literature supports these findings. Wanzer et al. (2010) demonstrated that cultural contexts significantly influence teachers' use of humour and students' responses. Similarly, Neff and Dewaele (2023) emphasised that when humour is employed to align with cultural sensitivity, it fosters a favourable emotional climate and strengthens relational dynamics within educational settings. Martin and Ford (2018) further noted that while humour can enhance motivation and trust in some contexts, it may undermine perceptions of authority in others.

In this regard, students raised in urban environments tend to perceive humour as a socially accepted and valued form of interaction, which may contribute to their more favourable evaluations of humour in educational contexts. Conversely, in rural settings, where humour is often associated with authority and discipline, students may develop more restrained or cautious attitudes toward its pedagogical use.

The present study's findings demonstrate that humour functions not merely as a source of amusement but as a multifaceted pedagogical tool that enhances motivation, strengthens social bonds, and facilitates the learning process. Within the Faculties of Sport Sciences, humour appears to play a particularly salient role in practical courses, where it fosters teacher–student relationships, enhances communication, and promotes active classroom engagement

(Garner, 2006; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). The observed medium effect sizes ( $\eta^2 = .05-.06$ ) indicate that humour's pedagogical function in these contexts holds a practically meaningful impact that should not be overlooked.

However, the misuse of humour can lead to adverse outcomes. Zillmann and Stocking (1976) reported that aggressive humour increases tension among students; Jeder (2015) found that disparaging humour fosters mistrust; and Torok et al. (2004) observed that humiliating humour amplifies negative perceptions toward instructors. In physical education, sarcastic or derisive humour may heighten students' fear of failure, undermining the classroom climate.

Conversely, supportive and relational humour has been shown to promote student participation and reinforce a sense of psychological safety. Campbell et al. (2008) and Derks and Berkowitz (1989) emphasised that relational humour enhances belongingness, while Martin and Ford (2018) highlighted its contribution to both cognitive and affective development. Likewise, Banas et al. (2011) asserted that appropriately used humour facilitates learning, whereas misapplied humour can evoke negative emotional responses. Therefore, employing humour ethically and contextually-within appropriate boundaries-serves not only to enrich the learning environment but also to foster team cohesion and collective engagement.

In conclusion, humour holds significant potential as a pedagogical tool for enhancing student achievement and classroom interaction. Effectively realising this potential depends on educators' ability to employ humour with appropriate timing, dosage, and contextual sensitivity. Thus, teacher education programs should incorporate systematic training on the pedagogical use of humour, supported by case studies, role-playing activities, and scenario-based applications.

The most prominent finding of this study is that students enrolled in Faculties of Sport Sciences—particularly preservice physical education teachers—demonstrate significantly different attitudes toward the use of humour in educational contexts.

For preservice physical education teachers, the role of humour in practical and sport-related courses is particularly salient. When appropriately employed during physically demanding activities, humour can enhance student motivation, reduce anxiety, and foster greater lesson engagement. Moreover, humour strengthens teacher–student interactions, supports peer collaboration, and contributes to developing team cohesion and collective spirit. In this regard, humour should not be regarded merely as a form of amusement but as a strategic instructional method that enhances interaction, stimulates learners' intrinsic motivation, and sustains classroom dynamism.

Therefore, it is crucial that sport sciences curricula—especially those preparing preservice physical education teachers for practice-based instruction—incorporate pedagogical awareness of humour's educational functions. Enabling teacher candidates to use humour consciously, ethically, and with sensitivity to cultural differences will better equip them to create interactive, student-centred learning environments that support their future students' physical and social development.

Culture represents one of the most powerful socio-psychological factors shaping humour's perception, evaluation, and utilisation. The degree to which humour is valued, how

it is expressed, and the social functions it serves vary substantially across cultures. The limited number of cross-cultural studies has consistently reported marked differences in the perception and attribution of value to humour (Jiang et al., 2019). Yue et al. (2014) found that Canadian students valued humour more and perceived themselves as more humorous than their Chinese counterparts. Similarly, recent research has demonstrated that individuals' appreciation of others' humour production and the frequency with which they initiate humorous interactions vary significantly across cultural contexts (Jiang et al., 2019; Neff & Dewaele, 2023). Moreover, Davis (2013), in the introductory chapter of Davis and Chey's edited volume, indicates that humour in Chinese cultural traditions is shaped by norms of propriety, hierarchy, and social control, while also serving as a subtle means of negotiating authority and resistance (Davis, 2013).

According to Markus and Kitayama's (1991) theory of independence and interdependence, Western cultures emphasise personal autonomy, individuality, and self-sufficiency. In contrast, Eastern cultures define the individual through social relationships within the collective and prioritise social harmony. In interdependent cultures (e.g., East Asian societies such as China), individuals are inclined to maintain hierarchical order and preserve the concept of "face" (social reputation) within interpersonal relationships (Hwang, 1987). Consequently, sarcastic or disparaging humour directed toward relatives, elders, or close acquaintances is generally considered inappropriate and is often avoided (Fei et al., 1992). As Fei et al. (1992) explains, in such cultures, family members and close friends are regarded as part of the "in-group," and the loss of face by one member is perceived as a loss shared by the entire group. Within this context, humour in Chinese society appears to be shaped by the degree of social distance and hierarchical status between individuals.

In contrast, Western societies—particularly the United States—tend to be more egalitarian in social relations, viewing humour as a "social lubricant" that facilitates interpersonal interaction (Lynch, 2002).

In Eastern cultures, humour is often subject to social constraints that shape how it is perceived and employed in interpersonal relationships. Within Confucian-oriented societies, humour is expected to be expressed with moderation and respect, serving the broader function of maintaining social order and hierarchical balance. By contrast, humour in individualistic Western cultures is a communicative tool that enhances interaction, fosters intimacy, and reduces interpersonal barriers (Chen & Martin, 2007).

These cultural distinctions provide a valuable interpretive framework for understanding how Faculties of Sport Sciences students perceive and utilise humour. In culturally hybrid societies such as Türkiye—where both Eastern collectivist and Western individualist values coexist—humour functions simultaneously as a means of social connection and as a pedagogical strategy for capturing attention and fostering engagement. Students' positive attitudes toward humour are closely related to the flexibility of their cultural context and the degree to which humour is socially accepted as a mode of interaction.

In this regard, preservice teachers must develop cultural sensitivity when employing humour for pedagogical purposes. Teachers who understand how the meanings and appropriateness of humour vary across cultural norms can preserve mutual respect in the

classroom and enhance students' affective engagement. This is particularly important for preservice physical education teachers working in multicultural environments, as it enables them to employ humour consciously, ethically, and inclusively—thereby enriching the overall quality of the learning environment.

Türkiye occupies a unique cultural position in which both the East's collectivist values and the West's individualistic principles coexist within a single sociocultural framework. Consequently, Turkish preservice teachers' attitudes toward humour may simultaneously reflect sensitivity to authority and a desire for authentic interpersonal engagement. For students in the Faculties of Sport Sciences, humour is not merely an element of amusement but a pedagogical tool that facilitates learning, strengthens the classroom atmosphere, and reinforces social bonds (Garner, 2006; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999; Martin & Ford, 2018). However, without sufficient cultural awareness, humour can lead to misinterpretations or perceptions of threat (Zillmann & Stocking, 1976; Jeder, 2015). In particular, sarcastic or disparaging humour used during physical education practice may trigger fear of failure, embarrassment, or loss of motivation among students (Torok et al., 2004).

Conversely, supportive and relationship-oriented humour enhances students' attention, fosters a sense of trust within the classroom, and strengthens team cohesion (Campbell et al., 2008; Derks & Berkowitz, 1989; Banas et al., 2011). This positive effect tends to be especially pronounced in practice-based courses involving high levels of physical participation—such as sports training, recreational activities, or physical education sessions—where humour catalyses engagement and cooperation.

From a cultural standpoint, physical education teachers must remain aware of the sociocultural boundaries that shape the appropriateness and impact of humour. While humour can effectively capture students' attention and increase their intrinsic motivation, jokes that are culturally insensitive or prone to misinterpretation may undermine psychological safety within the learning environment. Therefore, it is recommended that programs in Physical Education and Sport Sciences—particularly those preparing candidates for practice-oriented teaching—include targeted training on the cultural context, communicative functions, and ethical boundaries of humour in education. This approach would enhance teaching quality while supporting students' cognitive, affective, and social development.

In conclusion, humour emerges as a multidimensional construct at the intersection of culture, social distance, and pedagogy. When employed with cultural sensitivity, humour can be an effective instructional strategy in physical education, fostering learning and participation while strengthening teacher–student interaction.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author(s) declare that there is no personal, financial, commercial, or academic conflict of interest within the scope of this study.

**Researchers' Statement of Contribution Rate:** Research design, data collection, statistical analysis, manuscript preparation, writing, and final revision were all carried out by ZÇ. The author read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

**Generative AI Usage Statement:** During the writing process of this study, artificial intelligence tools were used only to a limited extent; this use was limited to linguistic editing, grammar checking, and improvement of expression. The scientific content, theoretical framework, data analysis, findings, discussion, and conclusions were entirely created and controlled by the author(s). All ethical and scientific responsibility arising from the use of generative artificial intelligence rests with the author(s).

**Information about Ethics Committee Approval**

**Board Name:** Bayburt University Ethics Committee

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