

Original Article**Examination of Book Reading Habits and Empathetic Skill Levels of Nursing Students****Afife Yurttas**

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Correspondence: Afife Yurttas, Ataturk University, Faculty of Nursing, Erzurum, Turkey e-mail: afife-72@hotmail.com**Abstract**

The aim of the study is to examine the correlation between book reading habits and empathetic skills of nursing students. The universe of the study consisted of 276 students studying in the nursing department of a vocational school of health sciences at a university. The sample selection was not performed and the whole universe was involved in the study. However, students present at the school on the date when data were collected who agreed to participate in the study were included in the study and the study was completed with 236 nursing students. The data were collected using "Empathetic Skill Scale B Form" and "The Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habits." The attitude scale toward book reading habits total mean scores of students was found to be 74.71 ± 9.86 . The empathetic skill scale mean score of students was found to be 137.38 ± 15.56 and the empathetic skill score to be at moderate level. Moreover, no significant correlation was found between the attitude scale toward book reading habits sub-dimension mean scores and empathetic skill scale mean score of students.

Keywords: Nursing students, empathetic skill, book reading habits**Introduction**

Book reading habits include specific intellectual and creative activities such as taking pleasure in encountering an opinion, forming this opinion and establishing a new structure (Guleryuz, 2006). With this feature, book reading is an exciting way for individuals to understand their experiences and explore themselves and it is one of the most effective methods of systematically developing language and personality (Pala & Yıldız, 2012; Eroglu, 2013). The richness of book reading reflects on the thoughts and experiences of individuals and causes them to change their behaviors and thoughts.

Moreover, book reading creates the infrastructure of having knowledge and underlies the power of critical thinking and interpretation (Ungan, 2008; Eroglu, 2013). Besides these features, book reading habits are

in direct correlation with "desire to know" and these two dynamics support each other. "Desire to know" creates a need to

"inform." In this way, creative and productive individuals arise (Eroglu, 2013). These aspects of book reading habits mean that university students who constitute the intellectual section of a country's population are expected to have book reading habits. Since university students should be individuals who research, interrogate, discuss, generate an idea and learn in this way (Yılmaz et al., 2009). Book reading habits, important for all university students, are also extremely important for nursing students since they develop the process of obtaining and perceiving information, and contribute to the development of skills such as perceiving situations, critical thinking, analyzing, interpreting, and problem solving. Given that

each book can bring at least one's own experiences to individuals, book reading helps individuals establish better communication and develops their empathy skills (Eroglu, 2013). Empathy is a powerful instrument that shows what individuals think and feel and enables them to explore their internal experiences and gain insight. Moreover, it constitutes the most fundamental component of the supportive relationship at the center of nursing. Nursing literature states that empathy is one of the basic skill of nursing – that all nurses should have this skill and use it effectively (Alligood, 2005; Alligood & May 2000) that empathy is important in effective nursing care and therapeutic patient-nurse relationships (Brunero et al., 2010; Karaca et al., 2013). Therefore, empathy is thought to be the basis of nursing care (Brunero et al., 2010). Although the importance of empathy has been clearly stated, studies emphasize that nurses do not show adequate empathetic behaviors (Reynolds & Scott, 2000; Kynk & Olson, 2001; Karaca et al., 2013). In this respect, nursing students are expected to gain this skill during their university years (Cunico et al., 2012). In light of this information, prospective nurses are required to be individuals who have book reading habits and can research, interrogate, discuss, and create ideas as well as gain empathetic skills before starting their profession. Moreover, it is thought that there can be a correlation between book reading activity that prompts thinking and empathetic skill as a way of thinking (Facione, & Facione, 1996; Ekinci & Aybek, 2010). Although there are studies defining empathetic tendencies in nursing students, no study has been observed that examines book reading habits and the correlation between them and empathetic skill. In this respect, the aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of nursing students toward empathetic skills and book reading habits and examine the correlation between them.

Methods

Design: A descriptive and correlational research design was used in the study. It was conducted in the nursing department of a university vocational school of health sciences

between September 15 and November 15, 2014.

Setting and sample: The universe of the study consisted of 276 students studying in the nursing department of a university vocational school of health sciences. The sample selection was not performed and the whole universe was involved in the study. However, only students present at the school on the date when the data were collected who had agreed to participate in the study were included in the study and the study was completed with 236 nursing students.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form: The personal information form was developed to define the socio-demographic characteristics of participants. This form consisted of questions that determine the characteristics of students such as sex, year of study, socio-economic level, the education level of their parents, etc.

Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habits: The Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habits was used in the study. The scale was developed by Gomleksiz (2004) and its Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .88. The scale consisted of 30 items, 21 of which were positive and 9 negative. It has six dimensions including "Fondness", "Habit", "Necessity", "Desire", "Effect" and "Benefit." Responses given for the attitude scale were marked as "strongly agree=5", "agree=4", "slightly agree=3", "disagree=2" and "strongly disagree=1." (Gomleksiz, 2004).

Empathetic Skill Scale (ESS) B Form: The Empathetic Skill Scale (ESS), developed by Dokmen (1988) using "Gradual Empathy Classification," measures a person's skill at verbally expressing empathetic understanding in terms of emotional and cognitive aspects. ESS consists of two forms: "A" and "B." ESS-B Form is based on six different problems of daily life. Each problem has 12 empathetic responses that can be given to individuals confronted with it. One of the 12 is an irrelevant response inserted to reveal individuals who choose responses at random; it is scored as 0. If participants choose even one of these irrelevant responses, their forms

should be excluded from the assessment on the grounds that they have not read the scale adequately. Subjects are asked to choose four of these 12 responses for each problem. Scores corresponding to each response are given to individuals who have chosen 24 empathetic responses, including four responses for each problem, consulting the ESS-A form. The lowest possible score obtained from ESS is 62 and the highest score is 219. The test-retest reliability of the scale was found to be 0.91. Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.83 in the present study (Dokmen, 1998).

Data Collection: The study data were collected in classrooms of the nursing department of a university vocational school of health science. Data collection was conducted after the participants were informed about the study and its aims and methods and told that their personal information would be kept confidential. The questionnaire form was distributed to participants and the data for each class were collected in different periods.

Data Analysis: The data were analyzed using the SPSS 16 package program. Frequency distribution and mean tests were used for data analysis. To compare groups in terms of independent variables, variance was used for the normally distributed variables; the Kruskal-Wallis test was used for the non-normally distributed variables. To examine differences between groups, the significance level was regarded as 0, 05. The significance level $p < 0, 05$ refers to significant differences between groups and the $p > 0, 05$ refers to no significant differences between groups.

Ethical Dimensions of the Study: Before the onset of the present study, ethics committee approval was received from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Ataturk University. After the necessary written permission was obtained from the Vocational School of Health Sciences of Amasya University and necessary explanations were provided to participants, the data of the study were collected. After the aim and duration of the study and the procedures to follow during the study were explained to participants, their written informed consents were obtained and they were told they were free to participate or

not and could leave the study whenever they chose.

Results: When the distribution of participants' socio-demographic characteristics (Table 1) was examined, it was found that of the students, 50.4% were aged between 18 and 20, 76.3% were female, 34.3% were in their fourth year of study, 40.3% have three siblings, and mothers of 49.6% were primary school graduates and fathers of 74.6% were working. The distribution of min-max scores and mean scores obtained from the attitude scale toward book reading habits and the empathetic skill scale are shown in Table 2. The empathetic skill scale mean score of students was found to be 137.38 ± 15.56 and the total mean score of the attitude scale toward book reading habits to be 74.71 ± 9.86 . The fondness sub-dimension mean score of students, the highest sub-dimension of the attitude scale toward book reading habits, was found to be 24.18 ± 2.75 and their lowest sub-dimension mean score was from the effect sub-dimension; their mean score was 7.36 ± 2.54 . The comparison between socio-demographic characteristics of students and their empathetic skill scale mean scores (Table 3) showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the empathetic skill scale mean scores of students and the working status of their mothers and the education level of their fathers ($p < 0.05$) and that the difference between other socio-demographic characteristics was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The comparison between socio-demographic characteristics of students and their attitude scale toward book reading habits total mean scores (Table 4) showed that the difference between sex of students, the education level and working status of their fathers and the attitude scale toward book reading habits total mean scores was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, no difference was found between other socio-demographic characteristics of students and their attitude scale toward book reading habits total mean scores. The correlation between the attitude scale toward book reading habits mean scores and the empathetic skill scale mean scores is shown in Table 5. No statistically negative or positive significant correlation was found between the attitude scale toward book reading

habits sub-dimension mean scores and empathetic skill scale mean score ($p>0.05$).

Table 1. Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Students

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Age		
18-20	119	50.4
21 and ↑	117	49.6
Sex		
Female	180	76.3
Male	56	23.7
Year of study		
1	60	25.4
2	34	14.4
3	61	25.8
4	81	34.3
Residence		
City	109	46.2
District	91	38.6
Village	36	15.2
Number of siblings		
2	71	30.1
3	95	40.3
4	70	29.6
Education of mother		
Illiterate	13	5.5
Literate	17	7.2
Primary School	117	49.6
Secondary School	60	25.4
High School	29	12.3
Working status of mother		
Working	40	16.9
Not working	196	83.1
Education of father		
Primary School	79	33.5
Secondary School	41	17.3
High School	79	33.5
University	37	15.7
Working status of father		
Working	176	74.6
Not working	20	8.5
Retired	40	16.9

Table 2. Min-Max Scores and Mean Scores Obtained from Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habits and Empathetic Skill Scale

SCALES		Min-Max Scores	Mean Scores
Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habits	Fondness	15-32	24.18±2.75
	Habit	4-17	11.58±2.03
	Necessity	8-17	11.95±1.85
	Desire	3-13	6.12±2.24
	Effect	4-17	7.36±2.54
	Benefit	8-37	13.50±4.87
	Total Score	54-108	74.71±9.86
Empathetic Skill Scale		91-182	137.38±15.56

Table 3. Comparison between Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Students and Their Empathetic Skill Scale Mean Scores

Characteristics	Empathetic Skill Scale	Test and p value
	$\bar{X} \pm SD$	
Age		
18-20	138.02±17.31	t=0.63
21 and ↑	136.73±13.61	p>0.05
Sex		
Female	137.94±14.43	t=0.98
Male	135.58±18.78	p>0.05
Year of study		
1	139.83±15.23	
2	137.85±21.50	f=1.64
3	133.80±14.36	p>0.05
4	138.07±13.43	
Residence		
City	138.27±15.62	f=0.33
District	136.67±15.53	p>0.05
Village	136.50±15.76	
Number of siblings		
2	136.95±14.32	f=0.10
3	137.93±17.53	p>0.05
4	137.07±14.06	

Education of mother		
Illiterate	138.38±15.26	KW=1.70
Literate	137.05±14.48	p>0.05
Primary School	136.88±14.16	
Secondary School	139.01±18.79	
High School	135.75±15.13	
Working status of mother		
Working	144.40±12.80	t=3.18
Not working	135.95±15.72	p<0.05
Education of father		
Primary School	139.93±14.31	f=3.85
Secondary School	139.73±16.80	p<0.05
High School	132.62±16.40	
University	139.51±12.90	
Working status of father		
Working	137.91±15.72	KW=1,29
Not working	136.55±11.40	p>0.05
Retired	135.47±16.82	

Table 4. Comparison between Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Students and Their Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habits Total Mean Scores

Characteristics		Total Score	
		$\bar{X} \pm SD$	P
Age	18-20	74.55±10.66	t=0.25,
	21 and ↑	74.88±9.02	p>0.05
Sex	Female	73.56±9.18	t=3.27,
	Male	78.41±11.10	p<0.05
Year of study	1	76.11±11.29	f=1.32
	2	72.17±9.42	p>0.05
	3	75.40±10.36	
	4	74.22±8.35	
Residence	City	73.40±9.26	f=1.95
	District	75.54±10.72	p>0.05
	Village	76.58±9.06	
Number of siblings	2	74.80±9.46	f=0.18
	3	75.07±11.20	p>0.05
	4	74.14±8.30	

Education of mother	Illiterate	75.00±11.41	KW=6.98, p>0.05
	Literate	72.41±9.59	
	Primary School	76.68±11.13	
	Secondary School	72.81±6.58	
	High School	71.93±8.25	
Working status of mother	Working	73.30±10.35	t=0.99,
	Not working	75.00±9.76	p>0.05
Education of father	Primary School	77.05±11.92	f=2.71
	Secondary School	72.60±6.30	p<0.05
	High School	74.44±8.70	
	University	72.64±9.86	
Working status of father	Working	73.43±8.45	KW=9.10,
	Not working	75.55±11.79	p<0.05
	Retired	79.95±12.73	

Table 5. Correlation between the Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habits Mean Scores and the Empathetic Skill Scale Mean Scores

		Empathetic Skill Scale	
		r	p
Attitude Scale toward Book Reading Habit	Fondness	.101	.122
	Habit	-.055	.400
	Necessity	.063	.333
	Desire	.035	.597
	Effect	-.047	.472
	Benefit	-.114	.080
	Total	-.032	.626

Discussion

In the present study, the book reading habits total mean scores of students was found to be 74.71±9.86 (Table 2). In terms of total score, it can be stated that the book reading habits mean score of students was at the moderate level. Unfortunately, the fact that the book reading habits of students was at the moderate level is not a surprising result for today's society. Preferring instruments that help individuals reach information in the shortest period of time might have caused book reading habits to be at the moderate level in today's speeded-up society. In today's society, it is extremely important to raise

young people who are good speakers who listen effectively and think critically. It is necessary to nurture individuals' book reading tastes and habits to develop these skills at desired levels (Eroglu, 2013). Moreover, book reading habits are an important indicator of the developmental levels of societies. It is clear that today that the rates of book reading are high in many countries that produce information and technology and are described as developed countries (Arslan et al., 2009). Book reading habits are required to be at a high level especially for nursing students, as it is important for nurses to improve themselves, maintain professional development and think

critically, so they must gain book reading habits that can develop such skills when they are students.

In the present study, the empathetic skill scale mean scores of students were found to be 137.38 ± 15.56 (Table 2). In terms of total score, it can be stated that the empathetic skill scale mean scores of prospective nurses were at the moderate level. Empathy is regarded as the best instrument for fostering communication between patient and nurse. It is stated that a good empathetic communication between patient and nurse can even affect the disease process and its results (Alligood, 2005). It is thought to be essential for empathy, which has such importance for nursing, to be at the moderate level without any special education, since the literature emphasizes that it is possible to improve empathy skills through education (Ancel, 2006; Ozcan et al., 2010; Cunico et al., 2012) and various education methods are necessary to develop empathetic skill (Karaca et al., 2013). Although students are not subjected to education about empathy, the fact that empathy is an important skill for the nursing profession is emphasized in many courses and there are efforts to develop it. Moreover, clinical practices may contribute to the development of this skill during the education process. Similarly, the empathetic skill mean score was found to be 133.97 ± 18.26 in the study conducted by Ay and to be 146.79 ± 16.21 in the study conducted by Cevahir et al. (Ay, 2006; Cevahir et al., 2008).

A statistically significant difference was found between the empathetic skill scale mean scores of students and the working status of their mothers and the education level of their fathers ($p < 0.05$) and the difference between other socio-demographic characteristics was found not to be statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3). It can be thought that as the education levels of fathers increase, they adopt more sensitive and interrogative attitudes in their methods of raising their children. Also, the fact that mothers of some students were working meant that the awareness level of mothers increased as a result of being in work environments and this may have been reflected on their families. In the present study, the comparison between the socio-demographic characteristics of students and their attitude scale toward book reading habits total mean score showed that those mean scores differed by sex (Table 4). It is stated in performance assessment studies in international education that women are way ahead of men in

book reading and understanding texts (Kavaklı, 2012). Moreover, these results of the present study can be attributed to differences in the emotional and developmental needs of males and females. These results also show similarity to the results of studies on book reading habits in different fields (Gomleksiz, 2004; Ozbay et al., 2008; Aslan, 2013).

The present study found a difference between the attitude scale toward book reading habits mean score and the working status and educational level of their fathers (Table 4). Given the fact that book reading habits start at home and in the family, this result is not surprising. Moreover, the traditional family type in Turkey is based on a patriarchal family structure model. It is thought that the fact that fathers were educated and working might have increased the level of encouragement that they provided for the education of their children. Similarly, in studies conducted by Coskun, a significant correlation was found between the educational level of parents and their frequency of book reading. Also, it was found in a study conducted by Odabas et al. that as the educational level of parents increased, the book reading frequency of children also increased (Coskun, 2003; Odabas et al., 2008).

Conclusion

There is no difference between the reading habits of students and empathy skills. Consequently,

- it can be stated that the book reading habits mean score of students was at the moderate level.
- it can be stated that the empathetic skill mean score of students were was at the moderate level.

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