

Examination of compassion levels of special education teacher candidates in terms of some socio-demographic variables

Cahit Nuri^{a*}, ¹Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Cyprus International University, 99138 Nicosia (via Mersin 10 Turkey), North Cyprus, Cyprus <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0805-1972>

Begumsu Varol^b, Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Cyprus International University, 99138 Nicosia (via Mersin 10 Turkey), North Cyprus, Cyprus <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3035-7521>

Cemaliye Direktor^c, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Art and Science, European University of Lefke, 99728 Lefke, (via Mersin 10 Turkey), North Cyprus, Cyprus <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6055-2224>

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Abstract

The scope of this study is to examine the relationship between compassion and effective teaching qualities of special education teacher candidates. The working group of the research consists of the special education teacher candidates who are in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and studying in the special education department of the universities in the spring term of 2019-2020. Since it was aimed to determine the compassion levels and effective teacher qualities of special education teacher candidates in the study, the screening model was used as one of the quantitative research methods. In the study, 315 special education teacher candidates participated. "Demographic information form" and "Compassion Scale", were applied to special education teacher candidates in the study in question. According to the results of the study, it was observed that female special education teacher candidates had higher levels of compassion compared to male special education teacher candidates. According to the age group, the compassion levels of students/teacher candidates aged 18-20 years were higher than those who are 24 years and older. In the study, it was determined that the difference between the scores obtained by the students from the Disconnection sub-scale of the compassion scale according to the family structure was statistically significant.

Keywords: Compassion, Effective Teacher Skills, Candidate Teacher, Special Education.

* ADDRESS OF CORRESPONDENCE: Cahit Nuri ^{a*}, Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Cyprus International University, 99138 Nicosia (via Mersin 10 Turkey), North Cyprus, Cyprus;

Email address cnuri@ciu.edu.tr / Tel.: +90 0548 888 0947

INTRODUCTION

Compassion is an emotion that directs the individual to help or favor themselves and the other person (Aydın, 2014). A sense of compassion, which is one of the main feelings of individuals; teaches situations such as helping, forgiving, avoiding violence, being just, approaching with compassion. Although the sense of compassion is within the basic emotions of individuals, it must be learned through experiences in order to transform behavior (Aydemir, 2018).

According to Gilbert and Irons (2005), the feeling of compassion is an individual's desire to reduce the pain of the other person, cognitive processes related to finding and trying to understand where the existing pain originates, and current methods for performing compassion-based behaviors. In this regard, a union is formed by the interactions of motive-emotion-thought and behavioral structures within the structure of compassion. The compassionate (sensitive) individual found meaning as a cognitive, behavioral and emotional attitude towards the other person in his / her needy and troubled times (Isgor, 2017).

In addition, compassion has been conceptualized as susceptible-sensitive love in studies (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). A sense of compassion in the teaching profession is important in that it is a factor that greatly affects the teacher's approach to students and learning experience. The presence of compassion increases teachers' understanding, supportive and reassuring attitudes towards their students. This feeling contributes to the transformation of the classroom into an environment of love, respect, sensitivity, commitment and integrity by bringing with it other positive emotions. Since individuals with special needs develop differently from individuals with normal development, teachers can experience the feeling of pity, the feeling of helping, and the feeling of happiness as they observe what individuals with special needs can achieve. By putting themselves in the place of individuals with special needs and the planning of their education by considering their thoughts and behavior, how they should perceive, is an important aspect of education. At the same time, this feeling helps to make the communication process of the teacher with their students positive (Akdeniz, 2014). In addition, it is effective in creating an educational environment that is open to interaction and supports cooperation in the classroom. Moreover, compassion supports the prevention of undesirable behaviors and the formation of desired behaviors in the classroom environment. Thus, it facilitates classroom life, increases students' interest and motivation to lessons, and makes the learning process more effective and efficient (Aydemir, 2018; López, Sanderman, Ranchor & Schroevers, 2018).

In recent years, many reports of violence between teachers and students in schools have come to the fore. In this context, the necessity of compassion in the educational environment comes into prominence. The presence of compassion brings along supportive, reassuring, understanding attitudes and behaviors. It also facilitates mutual tolerance, sensitivity, commitment, love, and respect. The presence of all this in the school and classroom environment allows students to gain values such as compassion. At the same time, it is easier to prevent undesirable behaviors and to form desired behaviors in a classroom environment that is open to interaction and supports cooperation (Jacobson, Wilson, Kurz, & Kellum, 2018; Kapıcıoğlu, 2019). The learning process takes place more effectively and efficiently. Teachers with high levels of compassion, which are expected to be in the educational environment, will serve as a good example for their students and thus contribute to increasing their learning levels by creating a positive educational environment (Brundiers, & Wiek, 2017; Long, & Neff, 2018).

This study, which was carried out by taking all these into consideration, is important in terms of examining the basic variables that are supposed to affect the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates and in this context, by addressing the concept of compassion and shedding light on it. No academic studies conducted in Turkey and the TRNC that examined the sense of compassion on special education teacher candidates have been found. Concordantly, it is thought that this study will make a significant contribution to the gap in the field of special education and psychology.

The objective of this study is to examine the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates in terms of different variables. For this purpose, answers to the following sub-objectives were sought;

1. What are the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates?
2. Is there a significant difference between the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates and the age variable?
3. Is there a significant difference between the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates and their gender?
4. Is there a significant difference between the compassion levels of the special education teacher candidates and their family structures?
5. Is there a significant difference between the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates and their reasons for choosing a special education teaching department?
6. Is there a significant difference according to the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates and what being a special education teacher candidate mean most?
7. Is there a significant difference according to the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates and their re-selection of special education teaching?

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, descriptive research model, one of the general survey models, was used.

Population and Sample

The population of this research consists of the special education teacher candidates who are in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the 2019-2020 academic year and are studying in the special education departments of the universities. Accordingly, special education teacher candidates studying at universities located in Nicosia and Kyrenia Region within the borders of TRNC were included in the study. At the stage of reaching the whole population, it was planned to be carried out by distributing the scales manually to the special education teacher candidates in question and providing the necessary controls. However, due to the isolation environment because of Covid-19 Pandemic, it is difficult to reach the entire population in terms of time, cost and control. Thus, the easily accessible sampling method was chosen, and the scales were sent to 315 special education teacher candidates via Google Forms. The participation of teacher candidates from the TRNC has been provided.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Teacher Candidates (N = 315)

	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
18-20 years old	77	%24,44
21-23 years old	153	%48,57
24 years old and above	85	%26,98
Gender		
Woman	156	%49,52
Man	159	%50,48
Family Structure		
Nuclear family	183	%58,10
Extended family	118	%37,46
Fragmented family	14	%4,44

Total 315 %100

The socio-demographic characteristics of the students participating in the study are given in Table 1. According to the data obtained from the table, the age group distributions of the students included in the study are 24.44% aged 18-20 years, 48.57% aged 21-23 years and 26.98% aged 24 years and older. 49.52% of the participants are women and 50.48% are men. 58.10% of the students in the study have nuclear family structure, 37.46% have extended family structure and 4.44% have fragmented family structure.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Special Education Teacher Candidates (N = 315)

	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
The Reason for Choosing Special Education Teaching Department Again		
Being Popular	37	%11,75
To provide educational opportunities for individuals with S.N	89	%28,25
Loving children with special needs	18	%5,71
To ensure that individuals with special needs are beneficial to society	138	%43,81
Having individuals with special needs in the immediate environment	16	%5,08
Other	17	%5,40
What it means to be a Special Education Teacher Candidate		
Willingness to help individuals with special needs	25	%7,94
To touch the lives of individuals with special needs	162	%51,43
A profession that requires self-sacrifice	27	%8,57
A patient and understanding individual	79	%25,08
Pure love	22	%6,98
Choosing Special Education Teaching Again		
People who prefer	279	%88,57
People who do not prefer	36	%11,43

**More than one answer can be given.*

In Table 2, the reasons for choosing the special education teaching department of the students included in the study are "the department is popular" for 11.75%, "to provide educational opportunities for individuals with special needs" for 28.25%, 5.71% "for "loving children with special needs", for 43.81% "to ensure that individuals with special needs are beneficial to society", 5.08% for "having individuals with special needs in the immediate environment" and for 5.40% it is listed as "other". While the families of 86.03% of the individuals participating in the study have a positive point of view in choosing the Special Education Department, the perspective of the family of 10.48% is negative and the family of 3.49% is unconcerned. 7.94% of the students participating in the study stated that being a Special Education Teacher candidate expresses their "willingness to help special individuals" while 51.43% stated that it expresses "being able to touch the lives of individuals with special needs". On the other hand, 8.57% of them stated that it expresses "a profession that requires self-sacrifice", 25.08% stated that being a special education teacher candidate expresses "a patient and understanding individual" and 6.98% stated that it expresses "pure love". 88.57% of the students in the study stated that they would prefer Special Education Teaching again whereas 11.43% stated that they would not prefer it again.

Data Collection Tools

Demographic Information Form

In the demographic information form prepared by the researcher, questions regarding socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, family structure) and special education (The reason for choosing the special education teaching department, what it means to be a special education teacher candidate, the situation of choosing special education teaching again) were asked for the special education teacher candidates participating in the study to be answered.

Compassion Scale

In order to determine the compassion levels of teacher candidates in the research; The Compassion Scale, which was developed by Pommier (2011) and whose Turkish validity-reliability study was conducted by Akdeniz and Deniz (2016), was used. Compassion Scale, consisting of 24 questions, was prepared in 5-point Likert type, and as a result of the factor analysis and reliability tests conducted by Akdeniz and Deniz (2016); It was accepted to be reliable according to the calculated cronbach's alpha = 0.85, and it contains 6 sub-dimensions: tenderness, apathy, awareness of sharings, disconnection, conscious awareness and disengagement. The scoring of the sub-dimensions of the scale is as follows: Apathy (2,12,14,18 - Reverse scoring), Tenderness (6,8,16,24), Awareness of Sharings (11,15,17,20), Disconnection (3,5, 10,22 - Reverse scoring), Conscious Awareness (4,9,13,21), and Disengagement (1,7,19,23 - Reverse scoring). For the total compassion score, after the sub-dimensions scored in reverse are scored, the sum of all sub-dimensions is taken. According to the results of the reliability test conducted by the researcher, the cronbach alpha value for the overall scale is 0.796. In this case, the scale was reliable.

Collection of Data

The data were collected with the personal information form prepared by the researchers and the Compassion Scale, whose Turkish validity-reliability study was conducted by Akdeniz and Deniz (2016). After obtaining permission from the heads of departments, the contact information of the representatives of the student groups was provided to the researchers by the heads of departments. After interviews with representatives of student groups, the e-mail addresses of the students and the addresses of the mass communication, where the student groups are present, were sent to the researchers. The scales created required to fill in all questions compulsorily. Students who participated in the study accepted that they participated in the study voluntarily.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 version was used for the statistical analysis of the data. In order to determine the hypothesis tests to be used in statistical analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, one of the normality tests, was applied to examine whether the data set showed normal distribution. As a result of the test, it was determined that the Compassion Scale scores were not normally distributed and non-parametric hypothesis tests were used. Frequency analysis was used to determine the demographic characteristics of the special education teacher candidates who participated in the study. Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values regarding the points that special education teachers got from the Compassion Scale were given. The Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which are non-parametric hypothesis tests, were used in comparing the Compassion Scale scores according to the demographic characteristics of special education teachers.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained from the research are included.

Table 3. The Scores Students Received from the Compassion Scale

Sub-Dimensions	n	\bar{x}	SS	Low	High
Tenderness	315	17,38	2,80	7,00	20
Apathy	315	7,37	3,02	4,00	20
Awareness of Sharing	315	17,06	2,44	7,00	20
Disconnection	315	7,91	2,96	4,00	20
Conscious Awareness	315	17,13	2,37	8,00	20
Disengagement	315	7,27	2,86	4,00	18
Sum Total	315	74,12	16,45	34	118

In Table 3, the scores of the students included in the study from the Compassion Scale are given. According to the findings obtained from the table, the mean score of the Tenderness dimension, which is one the sub-dimensions of the Compassion Scale, is 17.38 ± 2.80 , the mean score of the Apathy dimension is 7.37 ± 3.02 , the mean score of Awareness of Sharing dimension is 17.06 ± 2.44 , the mean score of Disconnection dimension is 7.91 ± 2.96 , Conscious Awareness mean score is 17.13 ± 2.37 , and the Disengagement mean score is 7.27 ± 2.86 . When the points that students got from the compassion scale were examined, the mean total score of the scale was found to be 74.12 ± 16.45 .

Table 4. Comparison of Students' Points Obtained from the Compassion Scale by Age Group

	Age Group	n	\bar{x}	SS	M	SO	χ^2	p	Diff.
Tenderness	18-20 years	77	17,71	2,49	18,00	165,91	0,872	0,647	
	21-23 years	15 3	17,27	2,84	18,00	154,29			
	24 years and above	85	17,27	3,00	18,00	157,52			
Apathy	18-20 years	77	6,75	2,84	6,00	138,32	5,646	0,059	
	21-23 years	15 3	7,34	2,72	7,00	160,47			
	24 years and above	85	7,98	3,57	8,00	171,37			
Awareness of Sharing	18-20 years	77	17,78	2,04	18,00	182,84	9,842	0,007*	1-3
	21-23 years	15 3	17,03	2,37	17,00	156,25			
	24 years and above	85	16,46	2,73	17,00	138,65			
Disconnection	18-20 years	77	7,32	2,76	7,00	139,99	4,051	0,132	
	21-23 years	15 3	8,05	2,79	8,00	164,39			
	24 years and above	85	8,20	3,36	8,00	162,82			
Conscious Awareness	18-20 years	77	17,21	2,59	18,00	164,36	0,594	0,743	
	21-23 years	15 3	17,16	2,23	18,00	157,23			
	24 years and above	85	17,01	2,44	17,00	153,64			
Disengagement	18-20 years	77	6,68	2,63	6,00	138,49	5,400	0,067	
	21-23 years	15 3	7,35	2,83	7,00	160,85			
	24 years and above	85	7,68	3,04	8,00	170,55			

* $p < 0,05$

Table 4 shows the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test regarding the comparison of the scores of the students included in the study from the Compassion Scale according to their age group. According to the data obtained from the table, it was found that there is a statistically significant difference among the scores of the teacher candidates that they obtained from the awareness of sharing sub-dimension of the Compassion Scale ($p < 0.05$). The Awareness of Sharing dimension scores of the participants aged 18-20 are higher than the scores of the participants aged 24 and over. According to the age group of the students included in the study, no statistically significant difference was found between the scores of the Compassion Scale from tenderness, apathy, disconnection, conscious awareness, and disengagement sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. Comparison of Students' Points Obtained from the Compassion Scale According to Their Gender

	Gender	n	\bar{x}	SS	M	SO	Z	p
Tenderness	Woman	156	18,03	2,17	19,00	175,92	-3,530	0,000*
	Man	159	16,74	3,18	18,00	140,42		
Apathy	Woman	156	6,60	2,61	6,00	134,56	-4,568	0,000*
	Man	159	8,12	3,22	8,00	181,00		
Awareness of Sharing	Woman	156	17,85	2,01	18,00	186,27	-5,519	0,000*
	Man	159	16,29	2,58	16,00	130,26		
Disconnection	Woman	156	7,21	2,57	7,00	137,23	-4,035	0,000*
	Man	159	8,60	3,15	8,00	178,38		
Conscious Awareness	Woman	156	17,46	2,22	18,00	170,25	-2,390	0,017*
	Man	159	16,81	2,47	17,00	145,98		
Disengagement	Woman	156	6,67	2,68	6,00	137,52	-3,992	0,000*
	Man	159	7,87	2,92	8,00	178,10		

* $p < 0,05$

In Table 5, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test regarding the comparison of the scores of the students in the study from the Compassion Scale according to their gender are given. According to the data in the table, it was found that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores of the students included in the study from the Compassion Scale's sub-dimensions based on their gender. Those sub-dimensions namely are Tenderness, Apathy, Awareness of Sharing, Disconnection, Conscious Awareness, and Disengagement ($p < 0.05$). Female participants' scores for Tenderness, Awareness of Sharing, and Conscious Awareness are higher than those of male participants, while their scores for Apathy, Disconnection and Disengagement are lower than those of male participants.

Table 6. Comparison of Students' Points Obtained from Compassion Scale According to Family Structure

	Family Structure	n	\bar{x}	SS	M	SO	χ^2	p	Diff
Tenderness	Nuclear family	183	17,30	2,96	18,00	157,11	0,144	0,931	
	Extended family	118	17,47	2,58	18,00	158,38			
	Fragmented family	14	17,64	2,62	18,00	166,39			
Apathy	Nuclear family	183	7,12	3,11	6,00	147,82	5,727	0,057	
	Extended family	118	7,69	2,90	7,00	171,00			
	Fragmented family	14	7,93	2,89	8,50	181,43			
Awareness of Sharing	Nuclear family	183	17,28	2,28	17,00	165,14	4,070	0,131	
	Extended family	118	16,66	2,64	17,00	145,00			
	Fragmented family	14	17,50	2,44	18,00	174,32			
Disconnection	Nuclear family	183	7,55	2,90	7,00	146,76	7,258	0,027*	1-2
	Extended family	118	8,44	2,88	8,00	175,54			2-3

	Fragmented family	14	8,21	3,77	6,50	157,04		
Conscious Awareness	Nuclear family	183	17,11	2,44	17,00	158,39	0,279	0,870
	Extended family	118	17,11	2,30	18,00	156,06		
	Fragmented family	14	17,50	2,14	17,50	169,32		
Disengagement	Nuclear family	183	7,09	2,80	7,00	152,28	1,794	0,408
	Extended family	118	7,49	2,82	7,00	166,45		
	Fragmented family	14	7,79	3,91	6,50	161,54		

In Table 6, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test regarding the comparison of the scores of the students in the study from the Compassion Scale according to their family structure are given. When Table 6 is examined, it was determined that the difference between the scores of the students in the study according to their family structure from the Disconnection sub-dimension of the Compassion Scale was at a statistically significant level ($p < 0.05$). The Disconnection dimension scores of the participants with extended family structure are higher than the scores of the participants with nuclear family and fragmented family structure. According to the family structure of the students included in the study, there was no statistically significant difference among their scores from the Compassion Scale's Tenderness, Apathy, Awareness of Sharing, Conscious Awareness, and Disengagement sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Table 7. Comparison of the Scores Students Obtained from the Compassion Scale According to the Reason for Choosing the Special Education Teaching Department

	Reason	n	\bar{x}	SS	M	SO	χ^2	p	Diff
Tenderness	Being popular	37	17,41	2,35	18,00	151,20	5,328	0,377	
	To provide educational opportunities for individuals with S.N	89	17,19	3,23	18,00	156,97			
	Loving children with S.N	18	15,94	3,39	17,00	118,08			
	To ensure that individuals with S.N are beneficial	138	17,60	2,50	18,00	162,39			
	Having individuals with S.N in the immediate environment	16	17,50	2,76	18,00	161,97			
	Other	17	17,88	2,80	20,00	181,03			
	Being popular	37	8,24	3,09	8,00	186,03			15,656
To provide educational opportunities for individuals with S.N	89	6,56	2,45	6,00	134,37	2-3			
Loving children with S.N	18	9,28	3,74	9,50	206,67	2-4			
To ensure that individuals with S.N are beneficial	138	7,28	3,00	7,00	156,27	2-5			
Having individuals with S.N in the immediate environment	16	8,06	3,79	7,00	171,19				
Other	17	7,76	3,07	7,00	170,82				
Being popular	37	16,51	2,57	17,00	138,31	4,581	0,469		
To provide educational opportunities for individuals with S.N	89	17,01	2,58	17,00	157,71				
Loving children with S.N	18	16,44	2,55	17,00	136,50				
To ensure that individuals with S.N are beneficial	138	17,27	2,32	17,00	164,31				
Having individuals with S.N in the immediate environment	16	16,81	2,66	17,00	151,44				
Other	17	17,71	1,93	18,00	180,09				
Being popular	37	8,70	2,36	9,00	191,58			9,907	0,078
To provide educational opportunities for individuals with S.N	89	7,84	3,05	7,00	154,43				
Loving children with S.N	18	9,00	3,03	8,00	189,53				
To ensure that individuals with S.N are beneficial	138	7,60	3,00	7,00	147,30				
Having individuals with S.N in the immediate environment	16	8,19	2,69	8,50	169,66				
Other	17	7,65	3,24	6,00	146,06				
Being popular	37	16,76	1,99	17,00	136,03	8,544	0,129		
To provide educational opportunities for individuals with S.N	89	16,89	2,59	18,00	152,18				
Loving children with S.N	18	16,28	2,44	16,00	124,33				

Disengagement	To ensure that individuals with S.N are beneficial	138	17,37	2,28	18,00	166,68	9,037	0,108
	Having individuals with S.N in the immediate environment	16	17,75	2,46	18,50	186,44		
	Other	17	17,59	2,27	18,00	174,74		
	Being popular	37	7,78	2,70	8,00	178,05		
	To provide educational opportunities for individuals with S.N	89	6,74	2,74	6,00	139,44		
	Loving children with S.N	18	9,06	4,19	8,00	195,94		
	To ensure that individuals with S.N are beneficial	138	7,27	2,66	7,00	160,72		
	Having individuals with S.N in the immediate environment	16	6,94	2,49	7,00	149,94		
	Other	17	7,41	3,41	6,00	156,82		

* $p < 0,05$

In Table 7, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test related to the comparison of the scores of the students included in the study from the Compassion Scale according to their reason for choosing Special Education Teaching department are given. When the data in the table were examined, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the students in the study from the apathy sub-dimension of the compassion scale, according to their reason for choosing the Special Education Teaching department ($p < 0.05$). The scores from the apathy sub-dimension of the participants who chose the special education teaching department to provide education opportunities to the individuals with special needs were lower than the scores of the other participants. According to the reason for choosing the department of special education teaching, the difference between the scores they received from the dimensions of tenderness, awareness of sharing, disconnection, conscious awareness, and disengagement was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Table 8. Comparison of Scores Students Received from the Compassion Scale According to What It Means to be a Special Education Teacher Candidate

	Reason	N	\bar{x}	SS	M	SO	χ^2	p	Diff
Tenderness	Willingness to help individuals with S.N	25	16,84	3,12	17,00	143,20	5,013	0,286	
	To touch the lives of individuals with S.N	162	17,65	2,68	18,00	167,01			
	A profession that requires self-sacrifice	27	16,89	2,69	17,00	136,89			
	A patient and understanding individual	79	17,35	2,82	18,00	157,13			
	Pure love	22	16,64	3,27	17,50	137,55			
Apathy	Willingness to help individuals with S.N	25	8,68	3,70	8,00	194,82	11,987	0,017*	1-2
	To touch the lives of individuals with S.N	162	6,91	2,70	6,00	144,75			2-3
	A profession that requires self-sacrifice	27	8,52	3,86	8,00	183,41			2-4
	A patient and understanding individual	79	7,20	2,66	7,00	156,95			2-5
	Pure love	22	8,45	3,70	8,00	186,34			
Awareness Of Sharing	Willingness to help individuals with S.N	25	15,08	3,24	15,00	99,00	16,755	0,002*	1-2
	To touch the lives of individuals with S.N	162	17,47	2,08	18,00	171,12			1-3
	A profession that requires self-sacrifice	27	16,33	2,63	16,00	130,69			1-4
	A patient and understanding individual	79	17,06	2,42	17,00	157,42			1-5
	Pure love	22	17,18	2,63	17,50	164,05			
Disconnection	Willingness to help individuals with S.N	25	8,44	3,58	8,00	171,98	5,919	0,205	
	To touch the lives of individuals with S.N	162	7,57	2,68	7,00	148,84			
	A profession that requires self-sacrifice	27	8,96	3,71	9,00	182,28			
	A patient and understanding individual	79	7,87	2,93	8,00	157,04			
	Pure love	22	8,68	2,95	8,00	183,23			
Conscious Awareness	Willingness to help individuals with S.N	25	16,60	2,35	17,00	136,10	2,546	0,636	
	To touch the lives of individuals with S.N	162	17,27	2,31	18,00	163,18			

	A profession that requires self-sacrifice	27	17,04	2,41	18,00	155,11		
	A patient and understanding individual	79	17,19	2,35	17,00	159,07		
	Pure love	22	16,64	2,87	17,00	144,48		
	Willingness to help individuals with S.N	25	6,88	3,02	6,00	141,52	11,315	0,023
	To touch the lives of individuals with S.N	162	6,80	2,45	6,00	144,99		1-3
Disengagement	A profession that requires self-sacrifice	27	8,52	3,78	8,00	188,43		1-4
	A patient and understanding individual	79	7,58	2,72	7,00	171,34		2-4
	Pure love	22	8,55	3,86	8,00	187,27		1-5
								2-5

* $p < 0,05$

Table 8 shows the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test regarding the comparison of the scores of the students included in the study from the Compassion Scale according to what it means to be a Special Education Teacher candidate. According to the data obtained from Table 9, it was determined that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores of the students included in the study from the apathy, awareness of sharing and disengagement sub-dimensions of the Compassion Scale regarding what it means to be a Special Education Teacher candidate ($p < 0.05$). Students, who believe that being a Special Education Teacher candidate means being able to touch the lives of individuals with special needs, received significantly lower scores from the Apathy sub-dimension than other students. Students, who believe that being a Special Education Teacher candidate means the willingness to help people with special needs, received significantly lower scores from the Awareness of Sharing sub-dimension than other students. In addition, the disengagement scores of the students who stated the expressions of wanting to touch the lives of individuals with special needs and help individuals with special needs were lower than the scores of other students. According to what it means to be a Special Education Teacher candidate, it was observed that the difference between the scores of the students in the subject of the study from the dimensions of Tenderness, Disconnection and Conscious Awareness was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Table 9. Comparison of Students' Points They Received from Compassion Scale According to Their Preference of Special Education Teaching Again

	Preference	n	\bar{x}	SS	M	SO	Z	p
Tenderness	Who prefer	279	17,50	2,71	18,00	161,00	-1,660	0,097
	Who do not prefer	36	16,44	3,30	16,50	134,76		
Apathy	Who prefer	279	7,16	2,92	7,00	151,84	-3,375	0,001*
	Who do not prefer	36	9,00	3,36	8,50	205,75		
Awareness Of Sharing	Who prefer	279	17,15	2,43	17,00	161,37	-1,848	0,065
	Who do not prefer	36	16,39	2,43	16,50	131,90		
Disconnection	Who prefer	279	7,74	2,90	7,00	152,71	-2,890	0,004*
	Who do not prefer	36	9,22	3,10	9,00	199,03		
Conscious Awareness	Who prefer	279	17,18	2,32	18,00	159,59	-0,875	0,382
	Who do not prefer	36	16,72	2,71	17,00	145,64		
Disengagement	Who prefer	279	7,03	2,71	7,00	150,92	-3,875	0,000*
	Who do not prefer	36	9,14	3,30	9,00	212,83		

Table 9 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for the comparison of the scores of the students included in the study according to their preference for studying Special Education Teaching again from the Compassion Scale. When the findings obtained from the table were examined, it was determined that the difference between the scores of the apathy, disconnection and disengagement sub-dimensions of the Compassion Scale was statistically significant according to the participants'

preference of Special Education Teaching again ($p < 0.05$). The scores of the participants who preferred Special Education Teaching again had lower scores than other participants in the dimensions of Apathy, Disconnection and Disengagement. There was no statistically significant difference between the scores of the compassion scale from the dimensions of Tenderness, Awareness of Sharing, and Conscious Awareness according to the students' preference of Special Education Teaching again ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion and Recommendations

In this study, the compassion levels of special education teacher candidates studying at various universities in the TRNC were examined in terms of several variables. In the light of the findings of the research, conclusion, discussion, and recommendations are included.

According to the findings obtained from the table, the mean score of the Tenderness dimension, which is one of the sub-dimensions of the Compassion Scale, is 17.38 ± 2.80 , the mean score of the Apathy dimension is 7.37 ± 3.02 , the mean score of Awareness of Sharing dimension is 17.06 ± 2.44 , the mean score of Disconnection dimension is 7.91 ± 2.96 , Conscious Awareness mean score is 17.13 ± 2.37 , and the Disengagement mean score is 7.27 ± 2.86 . When the points that students got from the compassion scale were examined, the mean total score of the scale was found to be 74.12 ± 16.45 . As the score from the scale increases, so does the level of compassion. Given that the highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 118, it can be said that the students' level of compassion is high. In the study conducted by Çingol et al. (2018), Gunduzoglu et al. (2019); The same scale was used in common with our study, and the compassion level of nursing students was found to be high. This similar result can be explained by the fact that ethics education has an important place in special education teacher education. The first point encountered in the moments of special education teacher candidates' acquaintance with the profession is to develop the independent life skills of individuals with special needs and to bring them into the society. Patience and self-devotion come first in working with individuals with special needs. Planning and developing a child's education, aiming to integrate him/her into society is based on acting in this direction. Compassion is the element of the behavior at this point. The concept that emerges in this context is the concept of compassion.

A statistically significant difference was found among the scores of the teacher candidates, which is the second finding of the study, from the awareness of sharing sub-dimension of the compassion scale according to the age group. The scores of the participants aged between 18-20 in the dimension of awareness of sharing are higher than the scores of the participants aged 24 and over. According to the age group of the students included in the study, no statistically significant difference was found among the scores of the Compassion Scale from tenderness, apathy, disconnection, conscious awareness, and disengagement sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$). It is believed that this result is due to the fact that the ages of the students participating in the study are close to each other, whether there is a person with special needs around them, or the values of the culture in which they grew up. In parallel with the findings of the study, Arkan, Yılmaz, & Duzenli, (2020) found that the age variable is associated with compassion in their study. In the study by Hacikelesoglu and Kartopu (2017), it was found that as university students age, their sense of compassion increases. Contrary to the results of the study, Cingol, Celebi, Zengin, & Karakas (2018) found that the age variable was not related to compassion in their study in which they examined the compassion levels of the students of the nursing department of the health faculty.

Another finding was that there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the students included in the study by their gender from tenderness, apathy, awareness of sharing, disconnection, conscious awareness, and disengagement, which are all sub-dimensions of the compassion scale ($p < 0.05$). While the scores of the female participants on the tenderness, awareness of sharing and conscious awareness dimensions were higher than the scores of the male participants, the scores on the apathy, disconnection and disengagement dimensions were lower than the scores of the male participants. Various studies have revealed that special education teachers experience higher stress than other teachers, they need to have more patience and more affection. It was thought

that the fact that women were more affectionate and moderate than men could be associated with gender roles. In parallel with our study in the field, in their study with Capan (2019), Aydemir (2018), Beresford (2016) and Pommier (2011), they showed a significant difference according to the concept of compassion in terms of gender. It is observed that female participants have a high level of compassion compared to male participants. Contrary to the findings of the study, Erdogan's (2017) study stated that there was no differentiation in male and female participants. Vatandas (2007), in his study on the perception of gender roles and gender roles in society, made us think that the levels of compassion in gender traits in our society may belong to female participants. Looking at gender differences in terms of pro-social behavior and helping, it is a complex situation. In general, women can be seen to be slightly more helpful and generous than men. However, there is no clear and consistent evidence as to which gender exhibits the most helping behaviors. In some studies, women are considered to be more advantageous in the context of compassion. In addition, there are many studies in the literature showing that women are more skilled in empathy. Empathy overlaps and is linked to compassion in a theoretical sense. Moreover, empathy is part of compassion. Therefore, given that women are more successful in empathy and helping behavior, they are thought to be more compassionate than men.

Within the context of the third finding of the study, it was determined that the difference between the scores of the students in the disconnection sub-dimension of the compassion scale according to the family structure was statistically significant. The Disconnection dimension scores of the participants with extended family structure are higher than the scores of the participants with nuclear family and fragmented family structure. According to the family structure of the students included in the study, there was no statistically significant difference among their scores from the Compassion Scale's Tenderness, Apathy, Awareness of Sharing, Conscious Awareness, and Disengagement sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$). In parallel with the findings of our study, Gulacti & Ciftci (2018) did not find any statistically significant differences between the gender variable and family satisfaction scores of the students. In their study, Seven et al. (2019) found a significant difference between the "family structure" variable and apathy sub-dimension mean scores. The mean scores of those with nuclear families were found to be higher. Individuals who grow up in a large family often experience emotional deprivation in a crowd. This can affect their level of compassion. In his master's study, Aydemir (2018) found that parental attitudes are effective at the level of compassion. In the study conducted by Isgor (2017) on the predictive effect of academic achievement on compassion and attachment styles in university students, it was found that university students whose perceived parental attitude was overly oppressive authoritarian had significantly lower compassion scores than university students who had one of the following parental attitudes: overly protective, negligent, overly tolerant, and democratic. Individuals learn by observing moral values or modeling their families. Emotions are acquired through transference, just like values. With the birth of a child, families play a vital role in helping their children gain a positive understanding of themselves and develop these values (Hokelekli, 2011). In addition, negative values such as domestic violence or harmful behavior can be learned within the family. The existence of compassionless behavior of children growing up in this type of family environment be a natural situation. Apart from this, negative attitudes they are exposed to in the family can cause them to perceive themselves as worthless and to have a critical attitude and obdurate stance (Sayar, 2011). However, the behaviors gained in the first years of childhood in the family continue in later life. It may be difficult to compensate for unearned behaviors in the coming years. Individuals who acquire compassionate, positive, and tolerant behaviors from their families can maintain such feelings and behaviors in the later years of their life (Capcioglu, 2015).

Another finding is that according to what being a special education teacher candidate means for them, the apathy scores of the students who reported being able to touch the lives of individuals with special needs were found to be significantly lower than the scores of other students. According to what being a special education teacher candidate means for them, the awareness of sharings scores of the students who want to help individuals with special needs are significantly lower than the scores of the other students. In addition, it was determined that the disengagement scores of the students who

stated the expressions of wanting to touch the lives of individuals with special needs and help individuals with special needs were lower than the scores of other students. According to what it means to be a special education teacher candidate, the difference between the scores of the students in the dimensions of tenderness, disconnection and conscious awareness was not found to be statistically significant. In the study conducted by Akdeniz (2014), it was observed that all sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence and total emotional intelligence differ significantly according to the compassion levels of university students. Emotions shape our thoughts, behaviors, perceptions, and judgments. At the same time, emotions are important in terms of gaining a forward-looking perspective by giving individuals a perspective on events. Compassion includes emotional energy that is triggered in the face of empathic situations and determines how the individual will behave in such situations (Akdeniz, 2014; Batson & Shaw, 1991). At the heart of a sense of compassion is the emotional feeling of the pain that someone else is in. A person tries to alleviate someone else's pain in order to regulate his/her own emotions with the guidance of this discomfort that one feels inside (Miller, Grimes, McMullen & Vogus, 2012). One of the basic components of emotional intelligence is thought to be empathy (Goleman, 1995). People with a high level of empathic behavior are more sensitive to the signals that show what others need and want. This association of compassion with the components of what it means to be a special education teacher candidate makes this finding of the research meaningful. It can be stated that compassion fatigue occurs due to delays in learning levels of special education teacher candidates in their internship courses and teaching practices with children with special needs. In a study conducted by Dogan, Ugurlu, and Cetinkaya (2013) in the light of the findings obtained from the negative sub-dimensions, it was concluded that teachers could not gain the value of compassion sufficiently. Consequently, it is considered that the feeling of compassion in teacher education is of great importance.

It was determined that the difference between the scores of the apathy, disconnection and disengagement sub-dimensions of the compassion scale was at a statistically significant level according to the students' preference for special education teaching again. The scores of the participants who preferred to study special education again in the dimensions of apathy, disconnection and disengagement were lower than the scores of the other participants. No statistically significant difference was found among the scores of the students from the dimensions of tenderness, awareness of sharings and conscious awareness of the compassion scale according to their status of choosing special education teaching again ($p > 0,05$). The concept of compassion is linked to various values such as love, respect, sensitivity, justice, tolerance, humility, and responsibility. Concordantly, deep in the teaching of the value of compassion lies the teaching of the relevant values that protect the human dignity of the individual. It is crucial for special education teacher candidates to realize their effective teaching skills when it comes to choosing the profession again. In addition, the concept of compassion improves individuals' empathy behavior and increases their awareness. In particular, it will contribute to the special education teachers in the education system to be more sensitive and to increase their awareness. In line with all these, special education teachers who develop good attitudes will have a desire for quality education and be more willing to touch the lives of individuals.

As a result, when various sub-dimensions of compassion were examined in the study, it was determined that there were significant differences according to gender and age variables. It was found that women received higher positive compassion scores than men. Furthermore, it was determined that the feeling of compassion made a significant difference in the reasons for choosing the department. Various studies emphasize that feelings of compassion should improve individuals' prior levels of empathy, motivation, sensitivity, non-judgmental attitude, and behaviors. Parallel to these, it is underlined that it will be possible to teach the feeling of compassion at professional level.

It is essential to create and develop the feeling of compassion in the special education teaching undergraduate program. In this study, only special education teacher candidates were included in the research. A comparison can be made in a study to be conducted with classroom and / or pre-school teacher candidates. Since the feeling of compassion is thought to be important in teacher education,

it is recommended to determine the variables that will develop the feeling of compassion and to conduct activities that involve experimental studies.

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