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**ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ**

## **Empatik Eğilim ve İletişim Becerisi İlişkisi: Karabük Üniversitesi Halkla İlişkiler ve Tanıtım Bölümü Öğrencileri Üzerine Bir Uygulama\***

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### **ÖZ**

Bu çalışmada bireylerin sahip oldukları iletişim becerileri ve empatik eğilim düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki incelenmekte olup çalışmanın evrenini Karabük Üniversitesi İşletme Fakültesi Halkla İlişkiler ve Tanıtım bölümü öğrencileri oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, bireylerin sahip oldukları iletişim becerileri ve empatik eğilimleri arasındaki ilişkiyi açıklamak ve katılımcıların cinsiyeti, aldıkları halkla ilişkiler eğitimi, ebeveynlerinin eğitim durumu gibi faktörlerin bu değişkenler üzerinde anlamlı bir farklılık yaratıp yaratmadığını belirlemektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda Karabük Üniversitesi İşletme Fakültesi Halkla İlişkiler ve Tanıtım bölümünün 231 öğrencisinden anket yöntemi ile veriler elde edilmiştir. Hipotezler Pearson korelasyon testi, regresyon analizi, t-testi ve ANOVA analizi ile test edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda empatik eğilim ile iletişim becerileri arasında orta düzeyde, pozitif yönlü, anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Ayrıca empatik eğilimin iletişim becerilerini anlamlı şekilde yordadığı tespit edilmiştir. Anne-baba eğitim durumu ile empatik eğilim arasında ve anne eğitim durumu ile iletişim becerileri arasında anlamlı bir farklılık bulunamamış, yalnızca baba eğitim durumu ile iletişim becerileri arasında anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmuştur. Halkla ilişkiler eğitimi sınıf düzeyi ile empatik eğilim arasında da anlamlı bir farklılık olmadığı görülmüş, ancak halkla ilişkiler eğitimi sınıf düzeyi ile iletişim becerileri arasında anlamlı bir farklılık tespit edilmiştir. Anlamlı farklılığın 1. sınıflar ile üst sınıflar arasında bulunduğu, 2. sınıftan itibaren gruplar arasında anlamlı bir farklılık olmadığı tespit edilmiştir. 1 sınıftan sonra 2. ve 3. sınıflarda yükselen ortalamanın 4. sınıfta düştüğü ancak anlamlı bir farklılık oluşturmadığı görülmüştür. Son olarak kadınların empatik eğilimleri ile iletişim becerileri arasında da anlamlı bir farklılık görülürken, kadınların empatik eğilimlerinin ve iletişim becerilerinin erkeklerden anlamlı bir şekilde yüksek olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İletişim Becerileri, Empatik Eğilim, Halkla İlişkiler ve Tanıtım

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# **The Relationship Between Empathic Tendency and Communication Skills: An Investigation on Undergraduates at Karabuk University Department of Public Relations and Publicity**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study discussed the relationship between the communication skills of individuals and their empathic tendency levels, and the population of this study consisted of the undergraduates of Karabuk University Faculty of Business, Department of Public Relations and Publicity. One of the aims of the study is to explain the relationship between the communication skills and empathic tendencies of individuals. The other aim is to determine whether factors such as gender, public relations education and the educational status of parents make a significant difference in these variables. Data were obtained from 231 undergraduates by survey method. Hypotheses were tested with Pearson correlation test, regression analysis, t-test, and ANOVA analysis. In conclusion of the study, a moderate, positive, and significant relationship was found between empathic tendency and communication skills. Also, it was found that empathic tendency significantly predicted communication skills. Between the education level of the parents and empathic tendency, and between the education level of the mother and communication skills wasn't found significant difference but a significant difference was found only between the education level of the father and communication skills. It was observed that there wasn't a significant difference between public relations education grade level and empathic tendency, but a significant difference was determined between public relations education grade level and communication skills. Finally, while there was a significant difference between the empathic tendencies and communication skills of females, it was determined that females' empathic tendencies and communication skills were significantly higher than males.

**Keywords:** Communication Skills, Empathic Tendency, Public Relations and Publicity

## **INTRODUCTION**

The individual communicates with other individuals around him to lead a healthy life throughout his life. It is known that the transfer of sense, thoughts, and ideas between the sender and the receiver generates communication. So, the sender and receiver, also called source and destination, are seen as the two terminal points of the communication process. In the case of a transfer of information from the source to the target, situations such as receiving feedback from the target and the target has specific communication skills ensure that the communication is a quality process. Communication skills can be sorted as positive qualities such as understanding and perceiving the other in the right way, listening to the other effectively, exhibiting empathetic approaches, being unprejudiced and fair. Individuals who have high communication skills can communicate easier with individuals around them. Quality communication consists of two separate individuals understanding each other in the right ways. It can be deduced that individuals should respect each other and be able to understand each other's feelings, situations, and thoughts based on this idea. Therefore, it can be said that the necessity of empathy for quality communication is undeniable. The notion of empathy has many definitions in literature and society, just as the notion of communication. Mostly, empathy is defined as the individual understanding the emotions and thoughts of other individuals correctly and the ability to put himself in the place of others. The potential of an individual to put himself in the place of another in his daily life and to look at his situation from his eyes is called empathic tendency. The topic of the study is the notions of communication skills and empathic tendencies. The scope of the study consists of the undergraduates of Karabuk University Public Relations and Publicity Department. The focus of the public relations and publicity department is to train public relations specialists who establish and maintain positive relations with the environment and institutions. It should be noted that public relations specialty aims to train individuals who are extroverted, sociable and have high social skills. Therefore, it can be said that the public relations education that undergraduates receive during their education contributes to them about development of communication skills, as well as theoretical knowledge about the field. That is why it can be said that individuals who are undergraduates of public relations and publicity department in the context of their own communication skills, how they evaluate their own

communication skills and how much they have empathetic tendency possess a significant place in both their social and business lives. Therefore, it is thought that the evaluation of the individuals' own communication skills and the determination of their empathic tendencies are substantial in terms of increasing their individual awareness and increasing their probability of being successful in the public relations sector. The main aim of the research is to examine the relationships between the level of empathic tendency of individuals and their communication skills in the context of certain variables. In other words, it is aimed to determine how the empathic tendencies and communication skills of Karabuk University Public Relations and Publicity undergraduates create a relationship in the context of certain variables and whether these relationships make a significant difference. As a consequence of that the empathic tendencies and communication skills of individuals were revealed, and the relationship between empathic tendency and communication skills was examined within the frame of factors such as gender, public relations education grade, and parent education status in this study. When the literature is investigated, it is seen that there are various studies (Dzhanuzakov, Türkçapar, Yasul, & Çakar, 2020; Gamsızkan & Cangür, 2019; Günönü Kurt ve Sarıtaş, 2019; İrak, Taşcıoğlu, Dal ve Tunç, 2017; Mutlu, Şentürk ve Zorba, 2014; Kadakal ve Alver, 2017; Karaman, Tatlı ve Yavuzekinci, 2017) which investigate university undergraduates' empathic tendency and communication skills in the context of different variables (gender, age, parental education level, faculty, grade level). It is comprehended that studies are generally aimed at determining empathic tendency or communication skills in the context of certain variables. However, it is seen that there are not many studies which conducted to determine the empathic tendency and communication skills of public relations and publicity undergraduates. Within the scope of the study, it was applied to 231 undergraduates in the Department of Public Relations and Publicity at Karabuk University two different scales, namely Empathic Tendency Scale (Dökmen, 1988) and Communication Skills Evaluation Scale (Korkut, 1996). It was also asked to fill in personal information forms in addition to these scales. It was investigated whether there was a significant relationship between the empathic tendency levels of the undergraduates and their communication skills thanks to the data obtained through these scales and this relationship was tried to be interpreted in the context of factors such as gender, public relations education grade level, parent education status.

Empathy and all sub-branches of empathy are within the sphere of psychology and there are many studies on the topic. Likewise, there are many studies on communication and all sub-branches of communication. The notions of communication and empathy are important phenomena that confront the individual in every area where the individual exists. In this context, one of the main reasons why there are many studies on these notions; It may be that these two notions are present in all areas of life of the individual. First of all, it was mentioned the subjects of empathy, empathic tendency, communication, and communication skills in terms of the topic of this research. In addition, the research method, study group, data collection tools were explained, reliability analyzes for the scales were carried out, statistical analyzes were made and the findings were explained. In conclusion, the results were discussed through the findings, the limitations of the research were mentioned, and suggestions were made for future research.

### **1. Empathy and Empathic Tendency**

Empathy can be defined in many different ways in literature and society. It is defined in its simplest and most understandable form as the ability of the individual to understand the feelings and thoughts of the other person correctly and to put himself in the place of the other person. According to Dymond (1949), empathy is the phenomenon of incorporation another's

ideas, feelings, and actions through imagination into one's own. According to Hogan (1969), empathy is the state of comprehension of another's situation in the mind and in an imaginary context or even if the individual has never experienced the same things, the ability of the understanding the feelings of the other individuals. It has been expressed by many researchers for years that the notion of empathy exists with its mental and emotional aspects. Indeed, Rotenberg (1974) proposed to define mental and emotional perspectives as "empathy" and "sympathy" rather than defining them as two different aspects of empathy. Thus, careful examination of cognitive and affective conceptualizations provides a comprehension of the contribution of each to the development of empathy. Shantz (1975), on the other hand, stated that the concept of empathy can be defined from either a cognitive or an emotional point of view. While the perception or comprehension of how another person is feeling forms the cognitive framework, the emotional framework refers to the reality of others' feelings and thoughts in the context of empathy. Many definitions have been made about the notion of empathy for a long time, empathy has been studied and the perspective of the notion of empathy has changed constantly. Dökmen (2021, p. 157), who has worked on empathy for years and developed empathy scales by producing an empathy model, defines empathy as the situation of an individual's comprehension veritably of another individual's feelings and ideas by taking himself for another and he states that this definition seems simple but there are many theoretical elements behind this. The potential of an individual to take himself for another in his daily life and to look at his situation from his eyes is characterized as an empathic tendency.

Hoffman (2000, p. 29), who researches empathy and the development of empathy, states that empathy is defined in two ways by psychologists. First, empathy is the cognitive awareness of another individual's internal states. As a second definition, empathy is an indirect emotional response to another individual. McDonald and Messinger (2011) stated that the ability to empathize typically develops early and rapidly, and they also discussed the factors which make easier this development. Accordingly, the factors which contribute to the development of empathy are respectively remarked as genetic factors, neurodevelopmental factors, temperament, imitation, parenting, and parent-child relationship quality. In the context of the development of empathy, Moore (1990) stated that the ability to comprehend the emotional states of others may increase in direct proportion to the age of the individual in terms of deciphering complex emotions, but a positive relationship between age and empathy may not be expected. Thus, although the development of empathy increases with age, generally a part of the development process may also occur through acquiring more information.

Heyes (2018), who argues that empathy is not in our genes but a subsequently learned phenomenon, states that opinions about empathy are deeply divided; however, each researcher who is interested in this topic defines empathy as an instinct preferred by evolution to make the individual a better parent or a better individual. Accordingly, it is widely accepted that empathy is an innate mechanism. Heyes challenges this perception. He argues that empathy is not innate in the individual, it emerges over time, through experiences and social-environmental factors and develops depending on all these. Similar to the aforementioned view, Rogers (1983) emphasizes that empathy is a subsequently learned ability and an individual's characteristic. In addition, Rogers states that this feature is a skill that cannot be found in everyone and that even those who have it can develop this skill further through education. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that many researchers examine the notion of empathy as "cognitive" and "emotional" empathy. In addition to these, it is seen that some researchers emphasize only one of these two items. Dökmen (1988) stated that Dymond, Shelton, and Hogan are placed in the

cognitive part of empathy by Gladstein and Rochester, and Stewart, Shaw, and Brewer are placed in the emotional part. In addition, Chandler (1973), Krauss and Glucksberg (1969), Maratsos (1973), and Hoy (1975) focused on the cognitive aspect of the notion of empathy with their measurement models; however, Rothenberg (1970), Borke (1973), Mebraian and Epstein (1972) pointed out the emotional aspect of the notion of empathy. While Feschbach (1975) emphasized the cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy, Ianotti (1975) also discussed the notion of empathy in a cognitive and emotional context.

According to Dökmen (2021, pp. 158-159), while an individual to puts oneself in another's place in a figurative context and comprehending another individual's thoughts is a mental activity; it is an emotional action to create in own self and feel the same feelings that the other individual has at that moment. Dökmen who points out that there are serious differences of opinion among researchers about the components of empathy, states that some researchers emphasize the cognitive aspect of empathy, while others examine the emotional aspect. In this case, Dökmen states that for empathy to be fully realized, the consensus of the majority is that "empathy consists of cognitive and emotional components".

Tarhan (2020, s. 164-165) describes the important steps of empathy as loving and sharing, and empathy is not only an emotion but also an understanding skill. The notion of empathy consists of two main concepts as "empathic tendency" and "empathic skill". Dökmen (1988) defined empathic tendency as the potential of individuals to empathize in daily life and developed an Empathic Tendency Scale (EES) to evaluate the potential of individuals to empathize in their daily lives. Empathic tendency generates the emotional universe of empathy and expresses an individual's ability to empathize. On the other hand, empathic skill shows the state of being able to empathize (Dökmen, 1994, Akt: Karaca, Açıköz, & Akkuş, 2013).

Within the scope of the notion of empathy, which is also expressed as "Eşduyum" in Turkish, the individual puts himself in the shoes of other individuals and thus can understand their feelings and thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, and lifestyles (Bach, 1983). Accordingly, while empathic tendency expresses the potential of understanding other individuals in the right way in social life; it can be said that the issues of empathy and empathic tendency have been the topics of many researches for years and have become significant things in life of the individual in the context of both social and business life.

## **2. Communication**

Communication is a way of transmitting one's own feelings and thoughts to other individuals and at the same time comprehension of other individuals. It can be said that the most fundamental feature of communication is meaning-making. Mutlu (1998, p. 168) states that there are many definitions of the notion of communication and these definitions differ according to the approach of those who define it. Zıllıoğlu (1993, p. 2) defines the notion of communication, in the context of human communication, as "be realized of the accumulation, transfer, and transaction of pieces of information, thoughts, feelings through symbols in common and different time and space dimensions".

The word communication comes from the old French "communication" in the context of its origin. It is known that the word communication is derived from the Latin word "communicationem" (Williams, 2018, p. 88). The word communication, whose meaning expands over time; has been used in the sense of "composing common knowledge, common feeling, common sensitivity, common opinion" (Tokgöz, 2015, p. 19). Fiske (2019, p. 71)

describes the phenomenon of communication as “face-to-face conversation, television, information dissemination, hairstyle, literary criticism” and underlines that an infinite number of additions can be made to the list. Zıllıođlu (2010, p. 33) states that communication is used to meet different interactions and meanings. According to him, communication in the context of message transaction is present in the life of each living species; however, there is the transfer of feelings, ideas, and informations by using symbols and signs only among individuals. In the most general and familiar sense, communication is the situation in which an individual transfers information to another individual or individuals. In this context, communication can also be considered as a transfer or message event (Yatkın & Yatkın, 2020, p. 14). Erdođan (2011, p. 37) who expresses that the individual is a biological and social being, states that the biological side of the individual is related to the physical existence and the maintenance of this state of existence. He states that the social side, on the other hand, is related to both physical existence and the organized existence of himself and others in society. While human psychology is present to a lesser extent in the emergence of the social side, there is more social production, distribution, and consumption. In this context, communication is a set of ideological actions which are the necessary condition for the individual to create and develop his or her biological, spiritual, and social existence. Communication is a required condition for the existence of the individual and society. It is impossible that the individual to maintain his/her own and social existence in the absence of communication (Erdoğan & Alemdar, 2010, p. 27). According to Cücelođlu (1993, p. 8), individuals are in communication with each other even if they are not aware of it in their daily lives. So, it means that there is not obligation to behave in a certain behavior for communication is exist. The case of not acting any attitude also composes a meaningful message within its context. Dökmen (2021, p. 37) briefly defines communication as the process of creating and transmission of information and adding meaning.

According to Luhmann (1992), communication is a reality that emerges in its own way just like life and consciousness. Accordingly, Luhmann stated that communication emerges by means of to be synthesized 3 different selections the choice of information, the choice of the pronunciation of the information, and the right or wrong understanding of this information. Murphy (1991), on the other hand, defined communication as "the transmission of messages from the sender to the receiver" and stated that describe to something is different from expressing the essence of something. He stated that the probability of the first doesn't require the second and so these 2 actions are rationally independent of each other.

It could be said that communication between individual or individuals occurs on the basis of a process. The aim of the communication process, which requires a transmitter who expresses his thoughts with certain symbols and a receiver who analyzes and perceives these symbols; is to create the thoughts of the transmitter in the receiver. In short, mutual influence, change, and repetition among the elements are compulsory topics in the notion of process. It seems like a requirement to approach the phenomenon of communication as a state of permanency (Yılmaz, 2003, p. 19).

The main aim of communication is to generate interaction among individuals. Effective communication is when the information which transmitted by the source is transferred to the receiver in accordance with the purpose of the source (Erođlu, 1996). For effective communication, the source requires to choose the images which can best and most accurately express the information wants to transmit and transmit them to the target via an appropriate channel. In addition to this requirement, the receiver should be able to comprehend what the

source narrates with the symbols which are expressed and be able to interpret these symbols in accordance with the meaning of the source's target (Sever, 1998).

## 2.1. Communication Skills

It is known that communication is the process of transference of the feelings and thoughts of individuals to other individuals around them. There are skills that individuals should have in order that this process can be an effective process. These skills are called all the behaviors that enable individuals to communicate effectively. All of the attitudes and behaviors which provide effective communication in society such as active listening, expression of oneself clearly and apprehensibly, and transferring the message to the target on the basis of respect and empathy, are classified as "communication skills". The most important and first step of effective communication is that individuals could be good listeners. It is known that it is necessary for the individual to primarily perform active listening in the context of effective communication. The individual should discover how to use the feedback process consistently and correctly to be a good listener; thus, communication ceases to be one-way and becomes two-way (Cüceloğlu, 1993, p. 115). By this means, while the messages received by the target return to the source in a more concrete way, the source feels that is listened to in effect by the target. It is known that most of the problems in communication arise from the inability to listen effectively. Therefore, listening actively is not only hearing what is said but also can perceive the message in what is said.

Hartley (2014, p. 99) states that good listening is generally defined as active listening. According to him, in the communication process, the individual should not only deeply understand the information he receives from the other individual, but also encourage the other one to talk and show that he is interested in the topic. Şahin (2015, p. 32) who defends that communication skills have a substantial place in the context of interpersonal communication (family relations, friendship relations, internal communication), lists the qualities that an individual should have for good and effective communication; respecting both oneself and others, adopting an empathetic understanding, possessing an active listening skill, speaking in concrete ways, being clear when expressing oneself, usage the "I language", transmitting the message completely, taking a transparent attitude based on respect, usage of verbal and nonverbal messages in the same harmony. Communication skills were examined under the subtitles as "ego-improving language, active listening, effective talking, self-knowledge-self-disclosure, empathy and well use of nonverbal communication elements" within the scope of the study.

According to Buluş, Atan, and Sarıkaya (2017), ego-improving language is a skill that positively affects an individuals' self in the process of interpersonal relations and the positive aspects of the individuals are emphasized through ego-enhancing language in the communication process. In other words, the deficiencies of individuals are expressed by emphasizing their positive aspects of them without causing them to see themselves as inadequate. Thus, it is tried that a positive direction is made that individuals can overcome these deficiencies.

Active listening is so substantial phenomenon in the context of effective communication. One of the substantial points in the context of active listening is an accurate perception. Active listening is required for accurate perception. Active listening means that care about the other person and what he or she transmits. A good listener should, first of all, give importance to the other person. (Eroğlu, 2013, p. 10) According to Çankaya (2015, p. 99) who

states that the listener should be much more active and careful in the context of active listening, an active listening environment is created if the listener listens to the speaker without prejudice during the active listening process. In this context, being unprejudiced and not taking a critical attitude during active listening are substantial factors in the formation of an effective listening environment. On the other hand, Mutlu (1998, p. 126) defines the notion of active listening as “the process of returning a listener's thought (both in content and emotion) to the speaker about what the speaker's intention is”.

Another substantial factor in effective communication in the context of communication skills is effective speech. The more the individual speaks beautifully and effectively, the more the individual's message will be successful. According to Işık (2011, p. 83), speaking beautifully and effectively is a quality that many people want to possess. However, the ability to speak beautifully and effectively is directly related to the general culture, knowledge, and experience of the individual. If the knowledge and vocabulary of the individual is insufficient in an effective speech, likely, the message will not be conveyed correctly. In addition to all these, there are other qualities that an individual must possess to have an effective speech. These are diction, emphasis, articulation, intonation, and pause.

Another substantial point in the context of communication skills is self-knowledge-self-disclosure. The notion of self-knowledge can be defined as all the information that an individual is aware of about oneself. Sezer (2010, p. 38) states that the core of the individual is a very substantial phenomenon in the communication process. The more the individual is aware of his own feelings and thoughts and the more the individual establishes a good relationship with oneself, the more the state of the individual's self-knowledge will develop. The individual who knows oneself becomes more transparent about oneself in line with his/her own will and opens oneself up. According to Çetinkaya (2015, p. 136), "self-disclosure", which is a substantial factor for individuals to get to know and understand each other better, contributes to the maintenance of the relations that develop between individuals in a secure way.

The notion of empathy is also so substantial in relation to communication skills. During the communication process, it is not enough that the individual only hears the other individual. It is necessary to understand and think about what the individual says, and to perform active listening. An individual who has the ability to empathize should be able to look at events and situations from his point of view, by putting oneself in the speaker's shoes. In the context of empathic communication, the listener should try to understand the value judgments of the speaker. (Akman, 2011, p. 64) Güngör (2013, p. 131), who draws attention to the fact that the individual should know the individual or individuals very well and be able to integrate with them, summarizes empathy as "it does not make sense for politicians to lecture on democracy and freedom ideals to people struggling with unemployment and trying to account for a slice of bread to feed their children". Thus, it is not possible to talk about quality communication in an order where the individual cannot empathize with other individuals and cannot put oneself in their place.

In conclusion, one of the elements which generate communication skills is the good usage of non-verbal communication elements. Nonverbal communication is a type of communication between individuals, which is created by means other than speech (Mutlu, 1998, p. 318). The notion of nonverbal communication is expressed in English as "nonverbal communication" and "body language". In this context, it entered Turkish as "body language" or "body language" (Eğinli, 2013, p. 137). Nonverbal communication constitutes a major part of



communication and is frequently used in the context of creating meaning and sharing in all areas of daily life without being conscious of it (Zillioğlu, 2010, p. 159). According to Güngör (2013, p. 79), who states that there are many different types of nonverbal communication, the most common of these types is mimic which is known as facial and eye movements. The prerequisite for effective communication is that the individual's words and facial and eye movements are similar. Accordingly, if the person says I love you to the other person, but this statement does not match the facial and eye movements, there is trouble here. Hand and arm movements which are also known as gestures are another type of nonverbal communication. Such bodily movements, in other words, body language, are nonverbal communication elements. According to Schober (2003, p. 30), nonverbal communication is divided into three areas as voice communication, silent communication, and objective communication. Voice communication covers phenomena that are closely related to language. These can be exemplified as accents and gaps of speech, or by laughing and sighing independently of language. Silent communication refers to visible body movements and includes only visual body language. Objective communication, on the other hand, is expressed as phenomena that complement the images of individuals. Phenomena that vary according to the preferences of individuals, such as clothes, home, and desk, can be given as examples of objective communication. Today, nonverbal communication is generally considered in the context of two separate channels. These two channels which are called the visible channel and the semi-linguistic channel, express different contexts. While the visible channel defines gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and distance; the semi-linguistic channel defines situations such as the loudness and rhythm of the voice. One of the sub-branches of nonverbal communication is the form of silence. Silence is also considered by many researchers as a form of trans language communication and often, depending on the situation, it can interrupt quality communication (Sezer, 2010, p. 222).

### **3. Research Model and Method**

The model of the research is relational screening and difference analysis. The research consists of relationship analysis method for empathy and communication skills and difference analysis for demographic factors and education level.

#### **3.1. Research Ethics Committee Approval**

Ethics committee approval was required within the scope of the study and ethics committee approval was obtained by applying to the committee through the ethics committee application form. The ethics committee name, date, and issue number pieces of information are as follows;

Name of Ethics Evaluation Committee: Karabuk University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee,

Date of Ethics Evaluation Decision: 13.10.2021,

Ethics Evaluation Document Issue Number: 2021/09- 26.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The universe of the research consists of undergraduates of Karabuk University, Faculty of Business Administration, Department of Public Relations and Publicity. Since the 559 undergraduates who were enrolled in the department in the 2021-2022 academic year, those who continue their education actively could not be determined exactly, 400 undergraduates

studying in this department were reached through the survey which is prepared to collect data. 316 reliable surveys were taken from the participants, and the survey data of about 85 participants were eliminated because they gave the same answers to the reverse-coded items. The lowest sample size was calculated as 218 with a 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error from the research population (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016, p. 132). Thus, hypothesis tests were carried out with the data from 231 surveys. 41.6% of the sample consists of male and 58.4% of female participants.

### **3.3. Data Collection Tools**

The survey was used as one of the primary data collection methods in this study. The data collection tool consists of three parts. The first part consists of items to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. Participants were asked about age, gender, parental education level, and participants' grade level in this part. The second part of the survey is the Empathic Tendency Scale (ETS) developed by Dökmen (1988). This scale, which was found to have a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.82 in Dökmen's study, consists of 20 items, and 5-point Likert-type responses are received in this scale. Participants respond to 20 items on a scale of 1 (Totally Opposite) to 5 (Totally Appropriate), in the manner corresponding to the statement they think which is appropriate for them. Items 3,6,7,8,11,12,13,15th of the survey were reverse-coded. After the survey data are collected, the answers to these items are reversed and the collection process is carried out over the answers. In this scale, a participant can get a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 100 points, and it is accepted that the higher the score of the participant, the higher his empathic tendency. The third part of the survey consists of the Communication Skills Evaluation Scale (CSES) developed by Korkut (1996). This scale, which was found to have a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.80 in Korkut's study, consists of 25 items, and 5-point Likert-type responses are received in this scale. Participants respond to 25 items between 1 (Never) and 5 (Always), in the manner corresponding to the statement they think which is appropriate for them. The high score obtained from the scale without reverse items means that individuals evaluate their communication skills positively.

### **3.4. Reliability Analysis of ETS and CSES**

The Cronbach Alpha reliability value was calculated in the reliability analysis to test the reliability of the scales. The Cronbach alpha value should be above 0.70 to ensure reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994, s. 265). The Cronbach Alpha value was found to be 0.72 for ETS and 0.91 for CSES as a result of the reliability analysis. Thus, the Cronbach Alpha value was found to be above 0.70 for all scales which was used in the study, and reliability was ensured for all variables.

### 3.5. Statistical Analysis

The data which was collected through the survey forms were tabularized with the Microsoft Office Excel package program. Logical testing and data extraction processes were carried out for the reverse-coded items. The analysis of the data which was considered to be healthy was made in the SPSS package program. Statistical tests were carried out by using the frequency, standard deviation, and average values of the data. Cronbach Alpha statistics were used to test the reliability of the scales which were used in the study. Hypothesis tests were performed on the scales whose reliability was accepted by means of the Pearson correlation test, regression analysis, t-test, and ANOVA test.

### 4. Findings

The undergraduates in the department of public relations and publicity who participated in the research show a distribution according to the variables of gender, grade level, education level of mother and father within the scope of demographic information. It is seen that 41.6% (96 people) were male and 58.4% (135 people) female participants of the 231 participants who were received healthy feedback. In the context of distribution by grade level, 29.4% (68 people) of the sample are 1st grade, 20.8% (48 people) of the sample are 2nd grade, 20.3% (47 people) of the sample are 3rd grade, 29.4% (68 people) are 4th grade. It is observed when the distributions of the participants intended to Mother's Educational Status is examined, the mothers of 5.6% (13 people) of the participants are illiterate. The mothers of 35.5% (82 people) of the participants are primary school graduates, the mothers of 29.9% (69 people) of the participants are middle school graduates, the mothers of 17.7% (41 people) of the participants are high school graduates, the mothers of 11.3% (26 people) of the participants are bachelor's degree or higher degree graduates. When the distributions of the participants intended Father's Educational Status is examined, it is seen that there are no illiterate fathers in the participants, the fathers of 26.8% (62 people) of the participants are primary school graduates, the fathers of 25.1% (58 people) of the participants are middle school graduates, the fathers of 30.7% ( 71 people) of the participants are high school graduates, and the fathers of 17.3% (40 people) of the participants are bachelor's degree or higher graduates.

**Table 1:** Test Result of Pearson Correlation Intended to Determine The Relationship Between Empathic Tendency and Communication Skills

Variables	N	R	P
Empathic Tendency	231	.516	.000
Communication Skills			

According to the results of the Pearson correlation test, which was conducted to determine the relationship between the empathic tendencies of the participants and their communication skills, a moderate, positive, and significant relationship was found between the empathic tendency and communication skills ( $r=.516$ ,  $p=.000$ ). 26% of the participants' communication skills variance is explained by empathic tendency ( $r^2= 0.266$ ).

**Table 2:** Result of Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Empathic Tendency to Explain Communication Skills

	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P	B	T	P
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Empathy	.527	.278	86,864	.000	8,696	9,320	.000
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Simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of empathic tendency on communication skills. According to simple linear regression analysis, the empathic tendency is a significant precursor of communication skills ( $F=86,864$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Empathic tendency explains 27% of the variance of the communication skills. When the empathic tendencies of the participants increase by 1 unit, their communication skills increase by 8,696 units. The formula which describes communication skills is as follows;  $53,557+ 8.696 \times$  empathic tendency. Simple linear regression analysis results between empathic tendency and communication skills are available in Table 2.

**Table 3:** ANOVA Test Result on Comparison of Father's Educational Status and Communication Skills Test Scores

	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean Squares	F		P
Between Groups	858,777	3	286,259	2,649		.05
In Groups	24532,963	227	108,075			
Total	25391,740	230				
Groups	N	$\bar{x}$	Ss	Primary School	Middle School	High School
Primary school	62	87,63	8,945			
Middle School	58	84,36	11,111	$p>.05$		
High School	71	86,42	10,285	$p>.05$	$p>.05$	
Undergraduate and Higher	40	82,18	11.558	$P<.05$	$p>.05$	$P>.05$

According to the results of the ANOVA test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the parental education status and the empathic tendencies of the participants, there was no significant difference between the parental education status and the empathic tendencies of the participants. According to the results of the ANOVA test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the parental education level and the communication skills of the participants, there was no significant difference between the mother's education status and the communication skills of the participants, while a significant difference was found between the father's education level and the communication skills of the participants [ $F(3, 227) = 2.649$ ,  $p=0.05$ ].

The Bonferroni test was used as a Post-Hoc test to determine between which groups the difference was. According to the results of this test, the communication skills of the participants whose father's education level is undergraduate or higher are significantly different from the communication skills of the participants whose father's education level is primary school ( $p<0.05$ ). The communication skills of the groups do not increase linearly with the education level of the father, and the communication skills of the participants decrease as the education

level of the father increases. According to the effect size of Partial Eta Square, father's education level explains 3% of communication skills.

**Table 4:** ANOVA Test Result on Comparison of Public Relations Education Grade Level and Communication Skills Test Scores

	Sum Squares	Sd	Mean Squares	F		P
Between Groups	2835,416	3	945,139	7,512		.000
In Groups	29191,109	227	125,824			
Total	32016,525	230				
Groups	N	$\bar{x}$	Ss	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
1st Grade	68	94,869	11,702			
2nd Grade	48	101,588	10,340	P<.05		
3rd Grade	47	103,437	11,472	P<.05	p>.05	
4th Grade	68	102,205	11,161	P<.05	p>.05	P>.05

According to the results of the ANOVA test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the public relations education grade level and empathic tendency and communication skills, it was determined that there was no significant difference between the public relations education grade level and the empathic tendencies of the participants [ $p>0.05$ ]. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the public relations education grade level and the communication skills of the participants [ $F(3, 227) = 945,139, p=0.000$ ].

The Bonferroni test was used as a Post-Hoc test to determine between which groups the difference was. According to the results of this test, there is a significant difference between the grade level of the participants and their communication skills ( $p<0.05$ ). When the group averages are examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the 1st grades and the upper grades, and there is no significant difference between the groups from the 2nd grade. It is seen that the average, which increased in the 2nd and 3rd grades after the 1st grade, decreased in the 4th grade, but did not create a significant difference. According to the Partial Eta Squared effect size, public relations education grade level explains 8% of the communication skills variance.

**Table 5:** Independent Groups T-Test Result on Comparison of Empathic Tendency Test Scores of Males and Females

Groups	N	$\bar{x}$	Ss	Sd	T	P
Male	96	3,300	.44	234	3.257	.001
Female	135	3,484	.43			

According to the results of the independent groups t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the empathic tendency and communication skills of women and men in the context of empathic tendency and communication skills according to gender; it was determined that there was a significant difference between the empathic tendencies of women and those of men ( $t=3.257, p<.05$ ). According to this result, the mean of the empathic tendency of women was found to be significantly higher than that of men.

The effect value which was calculated according to the Cohen d effect size is 0.42. Accordingly, the gender factor has a moderate effect on the empathic tendency.

**Table 6:** Independent Groups T-Test Result on Comparing the Communication Skills Test Scores of Males and Females

Groups	N	$\bar{x}$	Ss	Sd	T	P
Male	96	96,421	11,735	234	4.485	.000
Female	135	103,037	10,824			

There was also a significant difference between the communication skills of females and the communication skills of males. ( $t=4.485$ ,  $p=.000$ ). According to this result, females' communication skills averages were found to be significantly higher than males'. The effect value which was calculated according to the Cohen d effect size is 0.58. Accordingly, the gender factor has a moderate effect on communication skills. The relevant values are available in Table 6.

### Conclusion

First of all, it was aimed to determine the communication skills and empathic tendencies of undergraduates of Karabuk University, Faculty of Business Administration, Department of Public Relations and Publicity in this study. Thus, the relationship between communication skills and empathic tendencies of individuals was tried to be determined by considering factors such as gender, grade level, and parental education level. In this context, this study was applied to the undergraduates of Karabuk University, Faculty of Business Administration, Department of Public Relations and Publicity. The aim of the study is to state the relationship between the communication skills and empathic tendencies of the participants and to determine whether factors such as gender, public relations education grade level, and parent education status make a significant difference in these variables.

The relationship between the communication skills and empathic tendencies of the undergraduates of Karabuk University Faculty of Business Administration Department of Public Relations and Publicity was investigated in this investigation. At the same time, it was also examined whether the communication skills and empathic tendencies of the participants differed significantly in the context of demographic characteristics. Hypothesis tests were carried out with Pearson correlation test, regression analysis, t-test, and ANOVA test in the analysis of the hypotheses created for this purpose. In the context of the results of the research, a significant relationship was determined between empathic tendency and communication skills, and then, at a moderate level, a positive and significant relationship was found between them. At the same time, the empathic tendency is a significant precursor of communication skills, and empathic tendency explains 27% of communication skills variance. When the empathic tendencies of the participants increase by 1 unit, their communication skills increase by 8,696 units. It can be said that as the communication skills of the undergraduates of the public relations and publicity department increase, their empathic tendencies will also increase in light of this result. Günönü Kurt and Sarıtaş (2019) who reached a similar conclusion, stated that there was a positive and significant relationship between the empathic tendencies of the participants who participated in their research and their communication skill scores. Another study that reached a similar conclusion is the study of Özer Baltacı (2016). In this study, the differences in communication skills and empathic tendency levels of the X and Y generations were investigated. As a result of the study, it was stated that a positive and significant

relationship was detected between empathic tendency and communication skills Mutlu, Şentürk, and Zorba (2014) stated that they found a positive relationship between these two skills in a study which were conducted on undergraduates tennis players' empathic tendencies and communication skills.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between father's education level and communication skills. It was determined between which groups the difference was, and according to this determination, it was seen that the communication skills of individuals whose father's education level was undergraduate or higher were significantly different from the communication skills of individuals whose father's education level was primary school. The communication skills of the participants didn't increase linearly with the education level of the father, and the communication skills of the participants decreased as the education level of the father increases. Dzhanuzakov, Türkçapar, Yasul, and Çakar (2020), who have similar investigations, determined that the communication skill average score did not differ according to the parent education variable in the context of the participants who participated in their research. In another similar research Erigüç, Şener, and Eriş (2013) found that the communication skill scores of the participants didn't differ according to the education level of their parents.

According to the research indications, it is seen in Table 4 that there is a significant difference between the public relations education grade level and communication skills. There is a significant difference between the grade levels of the participants and their communication skills. It is seen that there is a significant difference between the 1st grades and the upper grades, and there is no significant difference between the groups from the 2nd grade. It is observed that the average, which increased in the 2nd and 3rd grades after the 1st grade, decreased in the 4th grade, but didn't occur a significant difference. In the study of Tutuk, Al, and Doğan (2002) who reached a different conclusion from the current study on the subject, it was observed that the communication skills and empathic tendency scores of the participants who were undergraduates of the nursing department were low and it was determined that the scores of both scales increased as the education years of the participants increased. Within the scope of this study, it is thought that the decrease in communication skills average scores may be related to the increase in participants' awareness of how communication should be with the rise in their education level. Because the education that the individual receives about how to communicate increases his/her self-awareness, the individual may evaluate own communication skills more negatively. From another point of view, it is normal to experience a decrease in communication skill scores due to the fact that the stress levels of the 1st and 4th grades are higher than the 2nd and 3rd grades. The stress level of the individuals who are in 1st grade is high because of their life changes. According to Batıgün and Kayış (2014), beginning university is a critical transition period for individuals, and, individuals may experience adjustment problems and an increase in stress and anxiety levels in this new period of their lives. The stress level of 4th-grade individuals, who have come to the end of their university life and are about to start a new life, is also high due to life change and future anxiety. According to Doğan and Eser (2013), when individuals who have just stepped into university life, try to leave their old environment and adapt to a new environment, meet new people and make new friendships, and try to live a life apart from their families; on the other hand, individuals who have come to the stage of graduating from university life and entering the business life, when they prepare to set out to implement their future plans try to cope with certain levels of stress. Such life changes may

increase the level of stress and accordingly a low in the communication skills of individuals may occur.

In the context of empathic tendency and communication skills according to gender, a significant difference was determined between the empathic tendencies of females and the empathic tendencies of males, and it was observed that females' empathic tendencies were significantly higher than males. There was also a significant difference between the communication skills of females and the communication skills of males, and females' communication skills were found to be significantly higher than males'. In a similar study, Levent Yaycı (2018) found that female undergraduates' empathic tendencies were significantly higher than male undergraduates in a study. In a study which was conducted by Yetişen (2018), it was determined that females' empathic tendencies are higher than males, and the reason for this is that females are raised more emotionally and sensitively than males. It is a known fact that females and males differ from each other in terms of their communication styles and perceptions. Dökmen (2021, p. 129) states that the gender factor is one of the elements that determine the quality of interpersonal communication in the context of the differences observed between females and males, even if it varies from culture to culture. The fact that females' empathic tendencies are higher than males' may be associated with gender roles. Although it may vary from culture to culture, generally females are forced to be compatible by family or society and this situation may cause females are more empathetic than males. There are differences between males and females in terms of certain characteristics, and these differences may emerge in various areas of life. In the literature, there are studies about communication skills may vary according to gender (Gölönü & Karıcı, 2010; Korkut, 1996; Korkut, 2005). In a study which was conducted by Korkut (1996), it was determined that the communication skills of individuals differ in the context of gender and that the communication skills of female students at the high school level are higher than male students. Gender roles can be shown as the reason why females' empathic tendencies are significantly higher than males' in the context of empathic tendencies. As another point of view, although it may vary from culture to culture, it can be said that females can be brought up more emotionally in the family than males, and this state may be the reason for the said difference.



In conclusion, within the scope of the main subject of the study, it can be said that the notion of empathy is one of the substantial elements which constitute the communication in the light of the literature searches and the findings which were gotten. Thus, it can be said that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and empathic tendency, and empathic tendency predicts communication skills. It was seen that there was no significant difference between mother's education level and communication skills, empathic tendency, and public relations education grade level in the study. It was determined that there was no significant difference between father's education level and the participants' empathic tendency, but a significant difference was found between father's education level and communication skills. It was observed that this significant difference was between those whose father's education level was primary school and those who had a bachelor's degree or higher. Between public relations education grade level and communication skills was found a significant difference. The communication skill scores of the 1st and 4th grades were lower than the 2nd and 3rd grades. The reason for this decrease may be that the stress and anxiety levels of the 1st and 4th grade participants are higher than the other grade levels. Finally, females' empathic tendencies and communication skills were found to be significantly higher than males' empathic tendencies and communication skills.

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