Determining The Relationship Between Nursing Students' Alexithymia Levels and Submissive Behavior and Self-Esteem

Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Aleksitimi Düzeyleri İle Boyun Eğici Davranışları ve Benlik Saygıları Arasındaki İlişkinin Belirlenmesi

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ABSTRACT

Aim: This study was conducted to examine the relationship between that nursing students' alexithymia levels with submissive behavior and self-esteem.

Methods: The population of the study consists of nursing students studying at Kilis 7 Aralık University. Its sample consists of 226 nursing students. The study was conducted between January - February 2021. Toronto Alexithymia Scale, Submissive Behaviors Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were used for data. The data were evaluated in the SPSS 24.0 statistics program. In addition to descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney U and correlation tests were used to evaluate the data obtained in the study. Ethics committee and institution permission was obtained in order to conduct the study.

Results: Nursing students Toronto Alexithymia Scale total score average is 51.94 ± 9.97, Submissive Behaviors Scale total score average is 40.57 ± 9.90, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale total score average is found as 29.63 ± 4.18. Nursing students' alexithymia levels with between submissive behavior was determined positive way a weak relationship ($r = 0.369$, $p = 0.001$). Students' alexithymia levels with between Self-Esteem was found negative way a middle-level relationship ($r = -0.461$, $p = 0.001$). It was determined that 51.3 % of the Toronto Alexithymia Scale received > 52 points.

Conclusion: Nursing students' alexithymia level were determined that submissive behavior and self-esteem are middle. As alexithymia level increased, also is increased show submissive behavior and as alexithymia level decreased, was determined self-esteem increased.

Keywords: Nursing; alexithymia; submissive behaviors; self-esteem.

ÖZET

Amaç: Bu çalışma hemşirelik öğrencilerinin aleksitimi düzeyleri ile boyun eğici davranışları ve benlik saygıları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek amacı ile yapılmıştır.

Materyal ve Metod: Araştırmanın evrenini Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesinde öğrenim görmekte olan hemşirelik öğrencileri oluşturmaktadır. Örneklemini 226 hemşirelik öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma Ocak - Şubat 2021 tarihleri arasında yapılmıştır. Veriler için sosyo-demografik veri formu, Toronto Aleksitimi Ölçeği, Boyun Eğici Davranışlar Ölçeği ve Rosenberg Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Veriler SPSS 24.0 istatistik programında değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmada elde edilen verilerin değerlendirilmesinde tanımlayıcı istatistiklerin yanı sıra Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney U ve korelasyon testleri kullanıldı. Araştırmanın yürütülebilmesi için etik kurul ve kurum izni alınmıştır.

Bulgular: Hemşirelik öğrencilerin Toronto Aleksitimi Ölçeği toplam puan ortalaması 51.94 ± 9.97, Boyun Eğici Davranışlar Ölçeği toplam puanı 40.57 ± 9.90, Rosenberg Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği toplam puanı 29.63 ± 4.18 olarak bulunmuştur. Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin aleksitimi düzeyleri ile boyun eğici davranışlar arasında pozitif yönlü bir ilişki saptanmıştır ($r= 0.369$, $p= 0.001$). Öğrencilerin aleksitimi düzeyleri ile benlik saygısı arasında negatif yönlü bir ilişki bulunmuştur ($r = -0.461$, $p = 0.001$). Toronto Aleksitimi Ölçeğinden %51.3'nün > 52 puan aldığı belirlenmiştir.

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Sonuç: Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin aleksitimi, boyun eğici davranışları ve benlik saygısı düzeylerinin orta olduğu belirlenmiştir. Aleksitimi düzeyi arttıkça boyun eğici davranış göstermenin de arttığı ve aleksitimi düzeyi azaldıkça benlik saygısının arttığı belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hemşirelik; aleksitimi; boyun eğici davranışlar; benlik saygısı.

INTRODUCTION

The individual's difficulties in recognizing and expressing his / her emotions, having an extrovert cognitive feature, and limitation in imagination and empathy skills are defined as "alexithymia". Although alexithymia firstly use as a term related to psychosomatic diseases in the field of mental health (Kamel 2013), recent researches have been indicated that is a common situation between both patient individuals and healthy individuals (Deng et al., 2013). Alexithymic individuals have difficulties that to establish emotional intimacy, think empathy, understand other individuals' emotions and interpersonal relationships. Depending on these, individuals have important problems that in develop friendship relationships, establish social relationships, being like yourself and behaving (Yavuz et al., 2019). In the researches, depending on alexithymic individuals restricted empathy levels, are established have problem that in interpersonal relationships and communication (Spitzer at al., 2005; Meganck et al., 2009). In order to not have these problems, alexithymic individuals rely on the emotions of others rather than their own emotions and act according to the wishes of the other party, and in general, it is seen that they are in harmony with the environment (Sevindi and Kumcağız 2018).

Submissive behavior is a set of personality traits not to hurt or offend others, try to please everyone around, benevolent, overly giving, tend to say "yes", unable to protect their own thoughts and rights (Topuz et al., 2018). Individuals with submissive behavior also see themselves as less valuable and insignificant, tendency to blame themselves, social anxiety, fear of being evaluated negatively, avoiding eye contact, and inability to express negative feelings and dissatisfaction (Mamırova and Yılmaz 2019). Self-esteem and assertiveness, which is the opposite of submissive behavior, is a necessary phenomenon for the continuation of social life (Özkan and Özen 2008). In a study, it was stated that submissive behavior is more common in individuals with low self-esteem, women, and people with less social support (Mete and Çetinkaya 2005). Self-esteem is a concept related to whether the individual finds himself valuable as a result of his self-assessment or to what extent he or she finds himself valuable (Karadağ et al., 2008). According to another definition, self-esteem is the individual's evaluation of herself as positive or negative (Royle 2010). Individual' self-esteem varies depending on the degree of personal satisfaction or frustration. An individual with low self-esteem has less self-confidence and dependent on others, shy, and less creative. An individual with high self-esteem has positive characteristics such as self-confidence, optimism and struggle with difficulties (Uyanık-Balat and Akman 2004).

Nursing is one of the professions where interpersonal interaction is important. Most theorists have defined nursing as an interpersonal interaction process and stated that commucation patient and nurse is important (Velioğlu 2012:100-200). Nurse, through interpersonal relationship fulfill basic responsibility of care both healthy and patient individuals. Communication between nurse and patient changes depending on the nurse's empathy power (Karaca et al., 2013). Individuals whose emotional awareness is not sufficiently developed experience problems during communication due to the inability of the people they communicate with to understand the hidden meanings underlying verbal and nonverbal messages (Aksoy and Çoban 2017). It is necessary to determine the levels of alexithymia, which are thought to affect the communication and empathy skills negatively, during the education process of nursing students before they start their profession. In addition, it is also important to ensure that submissive behaviors can be low and self-esteem can be high in order to be individuals who can make independent decisions since their studentship years and have well-developed social interactions, empathy skills and self-esteem (Eraydın and Karagözoğlu 2017). For these reasons, interventions aimed at increasing the emotional awareness of nursing students, developing positive self-esteem and reducing submissive behaviors should be implemented. When studies conducted in our country were examined, no specific study was found in which nursing students' alexithymia, submissive behaviors and self-esteem were examined. For this reason, it is thought that this study will contribute to filling an important gap in the literature. In this respect, the aim of the study is to examine the relationship between nursing students' alexithymia levels and their submissive behavior and self-esteem. Within the framework of this general purpose, the following questions were sought.

How are nursing students' alexithymia levels, submissive behaviors and self-esteem?

Is there a relationship between nursing students' alexithymia levels and their submissive behaviors and self-esteem?

Is there any difference between nursing students' alexithymia levels, submissive behaviors and self-esteem and socio-demographic characteristics?

MATERIAL and METHOD

Research Model

The research was designed according to the relational screening model in order to examine nursing students studying at Kilis 7 Aralık University in terms of alexithymia levels, submissive behaviors and self-esteem. In addition, a

causal comparison research model was used to determine whether there was a difference between the levels of alexithymia, submissive behaviors and self-esteem according to the sociodemographic variables of nursing students. A digital questionnaire was created by the researchers to minimize face-to-face interaction due to the pandemic. The digital questionnaire was delivered to the students via WhatsApp and e-mail.

Research Population and Sample

In the 2020-2021 academic year, 384 nursing students studying at Kilis 7 Aralık University constituted the universe of the study. The sample size was determined as 225 with 98% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. The research was conducted with 226 nursing students (157 females, 69 males) who accepted the research.

Collection of Research Data

The study was conducted with 226 students who agreed to participate in the study between 25.01.2021-05.02.2021. Filling out the questionnaire takes an average of 10-15 minutes.

Inclusion criteria;

- Be over the age of 18,
- Being a nursing student at Kilis 7 Aralık University,
- Speaking and Understanding Turkish,
- Volunteering to participate in research.

Table 1. Distribution of the descriptive characteristics of the participants (n = 226)

		n	%
Gender	Female	157	69.5
	Male	69	30.5
Class	1. class	43	19.0
	2. class	67	29.6
	3. class	56	24.8
	4. class	60	26.5
Living place	Village	27	11.9
	Town	50	22.1
	City Centre	149	66.0
Family type	Nuclear Family	176	77.9
	Large Family	50	22.1
Mother education level	≤ Primary Education	197	87.2
	≥ Highschool	29	12.8
Father education level	≤ Primary Education	149	65.9
	≥ Highschool	77	34.1
Family income status	Less than income	54	23.9
	Income is equal to expenses	149	65.9
	More than income	23	10.2

69.5% of the students are female, 29.6% are second grade, 66.0% live in the city center, 77.9% are nuclear family, 87.2% mother and 65.9% father ≤ primary school graduate, 65.9% income It was determined to be equal to the cost (Table 1).

Data Collection Tool

Research data socio-demographic data form, Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), Submissive Behaviors Scale (SBS), and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) were used.

Socio-demographic data form: The socio-demographic data form created by the researchers as a result of the literature review; consists of a total of 7 questions including age, gender, class, place of residence, family type, education level of the mother and father, income status of the family and employment status (Mete and Çetinkaya 2005; Karaca et al., 2015; Aksoy and Çoban 2017).

Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20): The scale is developed (1985) by Taylor et al. Turkish validity and reability were made (2009) by Güler et al. and Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.78. The scale consists of 20 items, 5-point Likert type and 3 sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions include difficulty recognizing feelings, (1., 3., 6., 7., 9., 13., ve 14. items), difficulty expressing feelings (2., 4., 11., 12., ve 17. items), extroverted thinking (5., 8., 10., 15., 16., 18., 19., ve 20 items). The 4, 5, 10, 18, and 19 items in the scale are scored by reversing. The maximum score that can be obtained from the scale is 100, and the minimum score is 20. From the whole scale, 51 points are included in the non-alexithymic group, 52-60 points in the moderate alexithymic group, ≥ 61 points in the completely alexithymic group (Güleç and Yenel 2010). In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.78 for the total scale, 0.88 for the difficulty recognizing emotions subscale, 0.65 for the difficulty expressing emotions subscale, and 0.63 for the extroverted subscale.

Submissive Behaviors Scale (SBS): The scale was developed (1994) by Gilbert ve Allan. The Turkish validity and reability were made by Şahin and Savaşır (1997) and Cronbach alpha coefficient were calculated as 0.89. The scale consists of 16 items and a single factor. The items are evaluated on the basis of 5-point Likert type, scoring between 1-5, and the maximum score that can be obtained from the scale is 80 and the minimum score is 16. Higher scores on the scale indicate more submissive behaviors (Şahin and Savaşır 1997). In this research, cronbach alpha was calculated as 0.83.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES): It is a self-report scale that evaluates self-perception, developed by Rosenberg in 1965. The self-esteem scale consists of 63 items and 12 subcategories, and the scale also has a short form consisting of 10 items. In the study were used short form of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Turkish validity and reability were made by Çuhandaroğlu (1986). It is a 4-point Likert-type scale and scores between 10 and 40 (Very correct = 4, Very wrong = 1). Self-esteem is scored correctly on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th and 7th items of the scale, and the 3rd, 5th, 8th, 9th

and 10th items of the scale reverse scored. 10-20 points indicate low self-esteem, 20-30 points moderate, and 30-40 points high self-esteem (Çuhandaroğlu 1986).

Statistical Analysis

The data were evaluated in the SPSS 24.0 statistics program (Statistical package for Social Sciences for Windows). In the statistical analysis, the suitability of the data to the normal distribution was evaluated with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and it was determined that the data were not suitable for normal distribution. In the evaluation of the data obtained in the study, in addition to descriptive statistics (percentage, frequency, mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum), Kruskal-Wallis tests were used for the comparison of two independent variables, and Mann-Whitney U tests for comparison of three or more independent variables.

Pearson correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between SBS, RSES, TAS total and subscale scores. Pearson's correlation coefficients <0.2 were expressed as very poor correlation, 0.2-0.39 poor, 0.4-0.59 medium, 0.6-0.79 high, ≥ 0.8 very high correlation. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated.

Ethical Aspect of the Research

Ethics committee (Ethics Committee No: 2021/01) and institutional permission were obtained to conduct the study. Volunteering was taken as a basis by writing the purpose of the research on the digitally prepared form. This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki Principles.

Table 2. Comparison of descriptive characteristics with TAS, SBS and RSES mean scores (n = 226)

		TAS $\bar{X}\pm SD$	SBS $\bar{X}\pm SD$	RSES $\bar{X}\pm SD$
Gender	Female	52.61±10.25	40.79±9.66	29.66±4.24
	Male	50.45±8.47	40.06±10.51	29.57±4.05
		Z=-1.214	Z=-0.167	Z= -0.309
		p=0.225	p=0.867	p=0.757
Class	1. class	52.19±9.08	41.79±10.80	29.30±4.30
	2. class	52.13±10.09	38.13±9.82	29.56±4.21
	3. class	53.80±9.68	42.93±9.42	28.91±3.46
	4. class	49.83±10.55	40.20±9.34	30.63±4.57
		KW= 3.720	KW= 4.631	KW=4.200
		p= 0.293	p= 0.201	p=0.241
Living place	Village	53.22±11.55	44.48±12.17	29.55±4.36
	Town	50.14±8.02	39.74±8.68	29.70±4.33
	City centre	52.32±10.24	40.13±9.74	29.63±4.12
		KW=1.413	KW= 3.844	KW=0.025
		p= 0.493	p=0.146	p=0.988
Family type	Nuclear Family	51.82±10.25	41.00±9.85	29.85±4.23
	Large Family	52.40±9.00	39.04±10.06	28.88±3.95
		Z= -0.386	Z= -0.984	Z= -1.578
		p= 0.699	p=0.325	p=0.115
Mother educational level	≤ Primary education	51.99±9.86	40.75±9.68	29.58±4.19
	≥ High school	51.62±10.85	39.34±11.43	30.0±4.13
		Z=-.399	Z=-.301	Z=-0.365
		p=0.690	p=0.763	p=0.715
Father education level	≤ Primary education	52.79±9.62	41.44±9.96	29.13±4.07
	≥ High school	50.32±10.50	38.87±9.64	30.61±4.24
		Z=-1.463	Z=-1.904	Z=-2.342
		p=0.144	p=0.057	**p=0.019***
Family income status	Less than incom	51.98±8.87	40.59±11.31	29.12±4.38
	Income is equal to expenses	52.27±10.37	41.07±8.97	29.54±4.13
	More than income	49.78±9.93	37.22±11.84	31.43±3.69
		KW=0.633	KW=3.335	KW=5.158
		p= 0.729	p=0.189	p=0.076

TAS= Toronto Alexithymia Scale, SBS= Submissive Behaviors Scale, RSES= Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.
KW=Kruskal Wallis H test, Z=Mann Whitney U test, t=Bağımsız gruplarda t test, p<0.05
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Limitations of the Study

This study reveals important results in terms of examining the level of alexithymia, submissive behaviors and self-esteem of nursing students in order to provide holistic and quality care. Although the study has its strengths, it also has limitations. This research is limited to the evaluation of student views within the scope of nursing students studying at Kilis 7 Aralık University. The result of this research can be generalized to the group that constitutes the sample of the study.

RESULTS

No significant difference was found between nursing students' gender, class, permanent residence, family type, mother's education level, family income, and total scores of TAS, SBS and RSES (p> 0.05). A statistically significant difference was found between students' father education level (Z = -2.342, p = 0.019) and RSES total score (Table 2).

The total score of the students in TAS was 51.94 ± 9.97, the Difficulty Recognizing Emotions sub-dimension mean score was 16.70 ± 5.96, the Difficulty Expressing Emotions sub-dimension mean score was 12.67 ± 3.55, and the Extroverted Thinking sub-dimension mean score was 22.56 ± 3.17. Nursing students' SBS total score was found to be 40.57 ± 9.90, and RSES total score as 29.63 ± 4.18 (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of TAS and its sub-dimensions, total mean scores of SBS and RSES, and minimum-maximum values

	$\bar{X}\pm SD$	Max-Min
TAS	51.94±9.97	25-82
Difficulty Recognizing Emotions	16.70±5.96	7-35
Difficulty Expressing Emotions	12.67±3.55	5-25
Extrovert Thinking	22.56±3.17	13-31
SBS	40.57±9.90	16-68
RSES	29.63±4.18	19-38

TAS= Toronto Alexithymia Scale, SBS= Submissive Behaviors Scale, RSES= Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

It was found that 52.7% of the students were in the non-alexithymic group, 29.6% were moderately and 17.7% were completely alexithymic (Graphic 1).
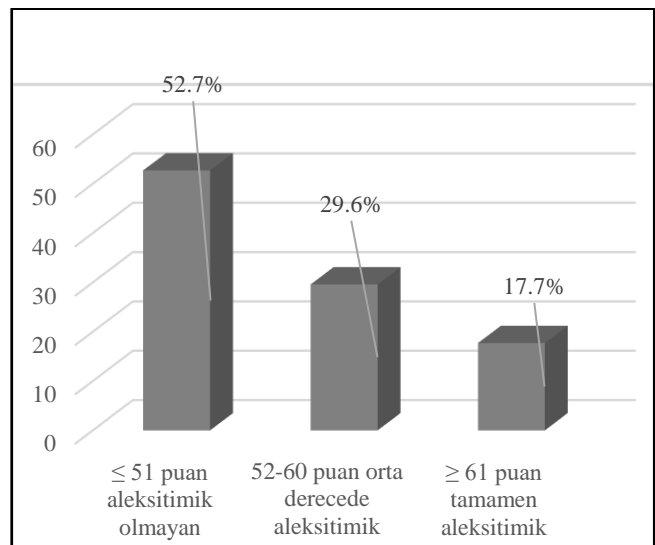

Chart 1. Distribution of TAS categorical values of students

A significant relationship was found between the categorical values of TAS and the total score averages of SBS and RSES (KW = 23.388, p = 0.001; KW = 33.347, p=0.001) (Table 4).

A weak positive correlation was found between nursing students' alexithymia levels and submissive behaviors (r = 0.369, p = 0.001). A moderate negative correlation was found between the alexithymia levels of the students and their self-esteem (r = -0.461, p = 0.001) (Table 5).

Table 4. Distribution of TAS categorical values and total mean scores of SBS and RSES

TAS categorical values	SBS	RSES
	$\bar{X}\pm SD$	$\bar{X}\pm SD$
≤ 51 points non-alexithymic	37.58±8.85	31.09±3.99
52-60 points moderately alexithymic	42.67±9.50	28.67±3.73
≥ 61 points completely alexithymic	45.93±10.60	26.98±3.68
	KW=23.388 p=0.001*	KW=33.347 p=0.001*

TAS= Toronto Alexithymia Scale.

Table 5. Correlation distribution of TAS and its sub-dimensions, SBS and RSES total scores

		1	2	3	4	5
1 TAS Total	r					
	p					
2 Difficulty Recognizing Emotions	r	0.896				
	p	**< 0.001***				
3 Difficulty Expressing Emotions	r	0.859	0.729			
	p	**< 0.001***	**< 0.001***			
4 Extrovert Thinking	r	0.453	0.128	0.200		
	p	**< 0.001***	0.054	**0.003***		
5 SBS	r	0.369	0.377	0.343	0.038	
	p	**< 0.001***	**< 0.001***	**< 0.001***	0.572	
6 RSES	r	-0.461	-0.483	-0.439	-0.077	-0.329
	p	**< 0.001***	**< 0.001***	**< 0.001***	0.251	**< 0.001***

r= Correlation test. TAS= Toronto Alexithymia Scale, SBS= Submissive Behaviors Scale, RSES= Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.
* p < 0.001, ** p < 0.05

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, which aimed to determine the level of alexithymia, submissive behaviors, and self-esteem of nursing students, were discussed with the literature. No significant difference was found between nursing students' gender, class, permanent residence, family type, mother education level, family income and TAS total scores. No significant difference was found between nursing students' gender, mother education status, family economic status (Aksoy and Çoban 2017; Sancar and Aktas 2019); class, place of residence, family type, father education level and TAS total scores (Sancar and Aktas 2019). It can be said that these findings reached in this study are supported by the relevant literature. In this study, it was determined that nursing students were moderately alexithymic. It was found that TAS got the lowest Difficulty Expressing Emotions, and the highest Scored Exrovert Thinking sub-dimensions. Alexithymic individuals have difficulties in interpersonal communication due to their inability to express their emotions. In addition, these individuals stand out with their extroverted personality traits and can be known as people who can establish seamless, harmonious relationships and live in harmony with their environment. However, it is stated that this situation is pseudo-normalcy, and in reality these people have little relation with their own spiritual reality (Yavuz et al., 2019). In studies conducted with nursing students, it was determined that the students were at a moderate level of alexithymia (Aksoy and Çoban 2017; Di Lorenzo et al., 2019). As a result of the literature review, it was determined that the nursing students were alexithymic at a moderate level and their score ranges from the sub-dimension of Exrovert Thinking with the highest and the lowest Difficulty Expressing Emotions (Sancar and Aktas 2019; Hamaideh 2018). It can be said that these researches obtained support the study finding.

In this study, it was found that nursing students' gender, class, place of permanent residence, family type, maternal education level, and family income were not determinant factors for profound affective behaviors. In a study, no

significant difference was found between mother and father education level SBS total scores, and a significant relationship was found between submissive behaviors and gender and grade level (Dikmen et al., 2017). In this study, it was determined that nursing students' submissive behaviors were at a moderate level. Studies conducted with nursing students in the literature found that students' submissive behaviors were at a moderate level (Özkan and Özen 2008; Dikmen et al., 2017; Şenturan et al., 2016; Torun et al., 2012).

In a study conducted with midwifery students, students' submissive behaviors were found to be moderate (Topuz et al., 2018). The findings in this study are in line with the literature. In this study, no significant difference was found between nursing students' gender, class, permanent residence, family type, mother's education level, family income and RSES total scores, and it was found that the father's education level was a determining factor in self-esteem. In the study conducted by Acharya et al with nursing students, a significant difference was found between education level, age, perceived family support and RSES total scores (Acharya-Pandey and Chalise 2015). In another study conducted with nursing students, a significant difference was found between grade level and RSES total score (Papazisis et al., 2014). The fact that self-esteem was not found to be different according to socio-demographic characteristics in this study may be due to the different time periods in which the studies were conducted, the sample size, and the different regions where the studies were conducted. Self-esteem of nursing students was found to be moderate in the study. In studies conducted with nursing students, it was determined that self-esteem was at a medium level (Karaca et al., 2019; Brando-Garrido et al., 2020; Ribeiro et al., 2020). The research findings in this literature are similar to the findings of our study. It was determined that as the level of alexithymia increased, submissive behavior increased, and as the level of alexithymia decreased, self-esteem increased. In the study of Kumcagiz et al. (2011), it was stated that nursing students should have some characteristic features such as expressing their feelings and thoughts and establishing effective communication. The student, who is

aggressive, non-submissive, able to express his feelings and thoughts and has high self-esteem, can communicate effectively with the patient when he starts his nursing profession, provide holistic health care, easily include the patient and his family in care, and fulfill the roles of leadership and patient advocate. In addition, it can effectively handle the problems and conflicts within the team and deal with them (Özkan and Özen 2008). In this respect, it is important for the quality of patient care to determine the alexithymic levels of nursing students and to make the necessary interventions in order to provide a quality and sustainable nursing care.

CONCLUSION

Nursing students' alexithymia, submissive behaviors and self-esteem were found to be moderate. It was found that as the level of alexithymia increased, submissive behavior increased and as the level of alexithymia decreased, self-esteem increased. In line with the results of the research, can advise studies on nursing students to be individuals who can make independent decisions, have high empathy skills and self-esteem, and apply teaching strategies to increase emotional awareness. In addition, educational programs can be organized to increase emotional awareness and self-esteem, studies to strengthen communication and to reduce submissive behaviors.

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