



## EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' AND PRESERVICE TEACHERS' SENSE OF HUMOUR AND ATTITUDE TOWARD DEATH

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### Abstract:

The study aimed to reveal if there is a relationship between teachers' and preservice teachers' sense of humour and death attitude. The researchers used correlational research design which is one of the quantitative research designs. Data were collected by using two scales that are "Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale" and the "Attitude towards Death Scale." As a result of the study, there was a meaningful relationship between sense of humour and attitude toward death for both teachers and preservice teachers. Besides, even if there is no difference between teachers and preservice teachers on sense of humour, there is difference one of the subfactors on death attitude. In the period of COVID-19 pandemic in which people highly face with death anxiety, the results can help to understand the importance of humour. Qualitative studies that could provide a deep understanding of the reasons behind these relationships can be conducted in the future.

**Keywords:** early childhood teachers, preservice teachers, sense of humour, attitude toward death

### 1. Introduction

Humour is a phenomenon that is experienced in different ways in all cultures and societies (Martin & Ford, 2018). Humour is seen as a positive personality characteristic or ability among people. However, humour is a concept that involves not only realising the funny parts of life, but also, negative thoughts and emotions (Avcı, 2012). According to

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Boysan (1990), humour is directly the art of the mind. However, even if humour is seen as a product of smart minds, it can be affected from several factors such as social norms, personality or psychological health (Lefcourt, 2001). Even if humour can be described as a term that provides positive feelings and psychological happiness, the effect of humour can be seen in different ways among people (Capps, 2006). For example, when the sociologic benefit of humour is examined, it is possible to say that humour can help people to express their ideas and feelings in a flexible environment and enhance to development of new relationships and socialisation (Yardımcı, 2010). Also, thanks to its function to deal with stress, the negative effects of stress on people's physical health can be overcome (Martin, 2002). That is why humour is one of the most effective defence mechanisms (Freud, 1928). Therefore, people who are experiencing negative situations can feel the need to use defence mechanisms to deal with the emotions related to these situations, and humour can be defined as a tool that could provide different points of view in such situations. As a result, thanks to the different points of view created with the help of humour can enhance to decrease the psychological devastation (Freud, 1928). The studies in literature also demonstrate the role of humour in dealing with anxiety, decreasing negative feelings, and strengthening the relationships among people (Abel, 2002; Avcı, 2012; Führ, 2002; Nezelek & Derks, 2001). To illustrate, in daily life, people may need a perspective to decrease negative emotions. Whereas some of the areas that people experience anxiety are work environment and family, one of the areas is about the end of human life (Avcı, 2012). Death is a universal source of anxiety that is commonly observed among people (Becker, 1973; Menzies, 2018). Even if the developments in health science and decrease in infant deaths lead people to think that death anxiety is commonly a concern for elderly people, the negative situations that are experienced all over the world make death anxiety is an issue for all people of all ages and societies (Menzies & Menzies, 2020). When people are highly faced with death situations, how they give meaning to death gains importance to develop balanced and adaptive behaviours. The people who fail to develop adaptive behaviours toward death may experience death anxiety (İnci & Öz, 2009).

According to Freud, people need two main sources for their faith, and these are life and death. Because of this reason, people internalise death as a part of their life (Badur, 2010). The people who have a hard time giving meaning to death to think that death will cause not to finish their plans and think about ambiguities after death (Özen, 2008). Lim and Song (2012) state that individuals' attitudes toward death also affect their anxiety level related to death. Therefore, learning about attitudes toward death can be a way to learn about their death anxiety. Even if this term is named as death anxiety or death fear, it includes many different terms in it, such as ambiguities, loneliness, loss, or withdrawal of loved ones (Kamçı, 2015). These kinds of emotions can cause developing negative psychologic behaviours and not enjoying with life. When we evaluate death anxiety in terms of teachers, it was found that teachers' psychological health affects their teaching performance and satisfaction with their profession (Brien, 2012). Especially during the time in which people highly face situations related to death such as COVID-

19 pandemic (Lee, 2020), how teachers are affected by this kind of situation can help develop an idea about how the education may also be influenced. Wright's (1985) study that shows the effect of teachers' attitude toward death on how they explain death to children and how they help children develop adaptive behaviours related to a death can be shown as evidence for the importance of teachers' death attitude. With the consideration of children's exposing the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, teachers' death anxiety and attitudes toward death may be effective in how they present death to children. Humour may be the way of dealing with these kinds of negative emotions and developing adaptive behaviours. At this point, developing a sense of humour can play an essential role in overcoming death anxiety (Morgan *et al.* 2019). In light of this, the relationship between sense of humour and death anxiety gains importance. As Morgan *et al.* (2019) show, who advocate that the sense of humour can reduce death anxiety and existential anxiety, it can be said that investigating whether the developed sense of humour can result in less death anxiety guides the studies aimed at improving the sense of humour. When the related literature examined, there are the studies that reveal the relationship between humour and positive personality characteristic such as self-awareness (Allport, 1961), being attractive and developing healthy relationships (Li *et al.*, 2009), and several cognitive processes such as abstract and critical thinking (Miller, 2000). In addition to the studies that show several positive aspects of humour, there are also other studies that display the positive effects of its use in education (Özdoğru, 2018).

There are studies in the literature that reveals the use of humour in the classroom has a positive effect on children's academic achievement, attitudes towards the lesson, their interest in the lesson, and teacher-student relations (Gorham & Christophel, 1990; Oruç, 2010; Özşahin, 2009; Van Praag *et al.*, 2017). The use of humour in the classroom, the type of humour used, and the way it is used are also related to the teacher's sense of humour. (Swanson, 2013). The sense of humour is also a character trait, and the character trait of the teacher is one of the critical factors affecting the development and learning of children (Abad, 2017). Pourghaz *et al.* (2016) concluded that the sense of humour affects teachers' performances positively. Considering this performance will directly affect classroom management and student-teacher relations, the importance of the need for humour can be better understood. Also, there are studies that show positive relationships between the teacher's sense of humour and students' learning motivation and academic achievement (Renninger, 2000).

The influence of teachers, who are the planners and managers of education, on children is an undeniable fact. Teachers, not only with the teaching methods they use, but also with their features, greatly affect the development and learning of children (Baier, 2018) and inspire their future dreams with this effect. Especially, teachers' psychological conditions in this process have also gained importance in the conduct of education, which is one of the most affected areas during the COVID - 19 Pandemic process (Gonzalez *et al.* 2020; Kim & Asburg, 2020). In this context, the relationship that can be revealed between sense of humour and death attitude can be a guide for teachers and teacher candidates to cope with death anxiety. That is why humour can be

seen as a good way to deal with the grief of death anxiety. That is why the sense of humour that teachers have will not only be beneficial for them to cope with death anxiety but also to cope with the classroom strategies they apply and the stressful situations they may experience in the work environment (Richards, 2012). It is thought that this situation will facilitate teachers to act by understanding the vital importance and role of their communication with children and create an awareness where they can manage the classroom environment more positively and find appropriate strategies easily. Perhaps one should question whether it is possible to express humour and grief at the same time. In this context, the present study aimed to reveal the relationship between teachers and prospective teachers' attitudes towards death and their sense of humour. In line with this purpose, developing a sense of humour since the university years, when the view of life was shaped to a great extent, can be considered as a way for teacher candidates to cope with death anxiety before starting their profession. It will contribute to the awareness of teachers as they progress in the profession.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Design of the Study**

In the study, it was aimed to examine the relationship between teachers and teacher candidates' feelings of humour and their attitudes towards death. At the same time, it was aimed to reveal whether there is a significant difference between teachers and teacher candidates' sense of humour and their attitudes towards death. In this respect, the research is a relational survey model. In the correlational survey model, it determines the existence and degree of the co-change between more than one variable (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2012; Karasar, 2009).

### **2.2. Population and Sample**

There are 421 teachers, 34.9% (n = 147) male and 65.1% (n = 274) female teachers in the scope of the study. There are a total of 287 teacher candidates, 18.1% (n = 52) male and 81.9% (n = 235) female teacher candidates in the study. In the research, data were collected online due to the pandemic process. The convenience sampling method was used to determine participants. The convenience sampling is the sampling made on (volunteer) individuals who are in the immediate vicinity and are easy to reach, available, and want to participate in the study if a region is not in question (Erkuş, 2013, p. 122). Since the application was made online due to the pandemic process, no sample was chosen from the population, but the study group was determined, and generalisation was made to the study population.

### **2.3. Data Collection Instruments**

In the study, two different scales were used in order to obtain information about the feelings of humour and attitudes towards the death of teachers and teacher candidates.

### **2.3.1. Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale**

The Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale was developed by Thorson and Powell in 1993. The scale is Likert type and consists of 24 items. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was made by Arslan et al. in 1999. The scale has four sub-dimensions: producing humour, coping with humour, attitude towards people producing humour, and evaluating humour. The scale was updated by Özdoğru in 2018. As a result of this update, it was found that the minimum and maximum scores that could be taken from the scale could be between 15 and 94. While the average of the scores to be obtained from the scale items was 65.50, the standard deviation was determined as 13.22. Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (.897) and Bartlett Sphericity tests applied for construct validity [ $\chi^2(276)=2222,620$ ;  $p<.001$ ] shows that the scale is suitable for factor analysis. While the Cronbach Alpha of the scale is 0.894, the coefficients of the sub-dimensions vary between 0.487 and 0.887.

### **2.3.2. Attitude towards Death Scale**

In order to learn the participants' attitudes towards death, the Attitude Scale Against Death, developed by Wong et al. (1994) and adapted into Turkish by Işık et al. in 2009, was used. The scale, which consists of 26 items, has four sub-dimensions: "Neutral Acceptance and Approach Acceptance," "Escape Acceptance" and "Death of Fear and Avoidance of Death." Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.81 for all items. While the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient calculated for the construct validity was 0.84, the Bartlett test result was found to be highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 2981.582$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

## **2.4. Data Analysis**

Within the scope of the research, the data collected from the measurement tools applied to teachers and teacher candidates were processed in the SPSS-24 package programme. The extreme values of the distributions of the collected data were examined and removed from the study. During the examination of extreme values, stem leaf graphs and boxplot graphs were examined, and extremely high and very low values were interpreted as extreme values (Tan, 2016, s.100). Before looking at the correlation analysis and difference analysis of the data collected from teachers and preservice teachers, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted to decide whether the data distribution was parametric or nonparametric. The skewness and kurtosis values of the data obtained from the scale were examined in order to test the normal distribution assumption of the scores related to the general and sub-factor of the scale. In Table 1, it is seen that the skewness and kurtosis values examined for testing the normality assumption vary between -1 and +1. As a measure of normality assumption, it is stated that it can be accepted that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are between -1 and +1 (Morgan, et al, 2004, p.50). When the homogeneity of the test variances, namely the distribution of the Levene homogeneity test, was examined, it was concluded that the test variances of the score distribution were homogeneously distributed according to Levene Statistics  $p>.05$ , that is, the assumption of homogeneity was achieved. It is seen that the distribution of points obtained from the scales is continuous data and is at the level of the scale with

equal intervals. The fact that two samples (groups) are independent of each other, dependant variables are measured at the range or ratio scale level, and normality and homogeneity assumptions are met the parametric test assumptions (Köklü, et al., 2007, p. 152-161).

**Table 1:** The Skewness and Kurtosis Values Regarding the Distribution of the Points the Teachers and Teacher Candidates Got from the Scales

N=257		Teacher		Preservice Teacher	
		Skewness	Kurtosis	Skewness	Kurtosis
Sense of Humor Scale	1. Producing Humor and Using it for Social Purposes	-,318	-,492	-,261	-,509
	2. Using Humor as a Coping Way	-,578	,128	-,488	-,275
	3. Attitude Towards People Producing Humor	-,030	-,048	-,950	-,205
	4. Evaluating Humor	-,154	,626	-,717	-,463
	Total Score	-,406	-,188	-,279	-,711
Attitude toward Humor Scale	1. Neutral Acceptance and Approach Acceptance	-,989	,332	-,998	,557
	2. Escape Acceptance	,113	-,910	-,018	-,813
	3. Death of Fear and Avoidance of Death	,178	-,536	,233	-,762
	Total Score	-,511	-,066	-,966	,187

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the skewness values and kurtosis values are in the range of +1 to -1, thus providing the normality assumption. The relationship between teachers 'and preservice teachers' feelings of humour and their attitudes towards death was examined by Pearson correlation analysis, one of the parametric test types. The difference between the scores of teachers and teacher candidates in general and sub-factors of the sense of humour scale was examined with the Independent-Samples t-test. The difference between the scores of teachers and preservice teachers in general and sub-factors of the scale of attitude to death was examined with the Independent-Samples t-test.

### 3. Findings

**First Sub-Problem:** Is there a relationship between teachers' sense of humour and their attitudes towards death?

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the relationships between teachers' sense of humour and their attitudes towards death are examined. Teachers' sense of humour related to the sub-factor of producing humour and using it for social purposes and the sub-factors of the scale of attitude towards death have positive and low-level significant relationships compared to  $p < .05$ . It is seen that there is a positive correlation between the general attitude towards death scale and a significant relationship according to  $p < .05$ , which is close to the medium level. Teachers' sense of humour related to the sub-factor of using humour as a way of coping and the sub-factors of the scale of attitude towards

death positively correlated with low-level  $p < .05$  and it is seen that there is a positive correlation between the general attitude towards death scale and a significant relationship according to  $p < .05$  which is close to the medium level. It is seen that there is a positive and low-level significant relationship according to  $p < .05$  between the attitudes of teachers towards people who produce humour and the sub-factor of avoiding death and fear of death. It is observed that there is no relationship between the humour evaluation sub-factor of teachers and the general and sub-factors of the scale of attitude towards death. It is also found that there is a positive low level of significant relations according to  $p < .05$  between the teachers' sense of humour and the sub-factors of the scale of attitude towards death, and there is a positive relationship between the overall attitude towards death scale, and there is a positive relationship close to the medium level according to  $p < ,05$ .

**Table 2:** Pearson Correlation Analysis Results Regarding the Relationship between Teachers' Feelings of Humor and Their Attitude towards Death

		Attitude towards Death Scale			
N=421		Neutral Acceptance and Approach Acceptance	Escape Acceptance	Death Fear and Avoiding Death	Total
Producing Humor and Using it for Social Purposes	r	0,22*	0,30*	0,24**	0,38*
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000
Using Humor as a Coping Way	r	0,19*	0,30*	0,24*	0,37*
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000
Attitude Towards People Producing Humor	r	0,01	0,04	0,10*	0,08
	p	,422	,181	,018	,051
Evaluating Humor	r	-0,05	-0,07	0,02	-0,04
	p	,177	,071	,347	,181
Total Score for Sense of Humor Scale	r	0,20**	0,30*	0,26*	0,38*
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000

\*  $p < ,05$  Categories: 0-0,30 = Low relationship; 0.40-0.60 = Moderate relationship; 0.70-1.00 = High level of Relationship

**Second Sub-Problem:** Is there a relationship between teacher candidates' sense of humour and their attitudes towards death?

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the relationship between the sense of humour of the teacher candidates and their attitude towards death was found. It was found that there was a positive and low level of a positive correlation between teacher candidates' sense of humour related to the sub-factor of producing humour and using it for social purposes and the sub-factors of the attitude towards death scale, and there is a positive and moderate positive relationship between the general attitude towards death scale compared to  $p < .05$ . It revealed that there was a positive and low level of a positive correlation between teacher candidates' sense of humour related to the sub-factor of using humour as a way of coping and sub-factors of the attitude towards death scale. And there is a positive and moderate positive relationship between the general attitude towards

death scale compared to  $p < .05$ . It is seen that there is a positive and low-level significant relationship between the humour feelings of the teacher candidates' attitude towards humour sub-factor and the "Neutral Acceptance and Approach Acceptance" sub-factor of the scale of attitude towards death and the overall scale with a low level of  $p < .05$ . There is a positive and low-level significant relation according to  $p < .05$  between teacher candidates' sense of humour related to humour evaluation sub-factor and "Neutral Acceptance and Approach Acceptance" sub-factor of the scale of attitude towards death and the overall scale. A low-level positive relationship was found between the total sense of humour and some sub-factors that are "Escape Acceptance" and "Avoiding Death and Fear of Death," and a positive relationship at the middle level with sub-factors that are Neutral "Acceptance and Approach Acceptance." Finally, when looked at the total scores of these two scales, there is a positive relationship at a medium level between preschool teachers' sense of humour and attitude toward death.

**Table 3:** Pearson Correlation Analysis Results Regarding the Relationship between Preservice Teachers' Emotions of Humor and Their Attitudes towards Death

N=287		Attitude Toward Death			
		Neutral Acceptance and Approach Acceptance	Escape Acceptance	Death Fear and Avoiding Death	Total
Producing Humor and Using it for Social Purposes	r	0,30*	0,23*	0,23*	0,42*
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000
Using Humor as a Coping Way	r	0,28*	0,22*	,28*	0,43*
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000
Attitude Towards People Producing Humor	r	0,26*	0,03	0,04	0,19*
	p	,000	,336	,272	,001
Evaluating Humor	r	0,24*	-0,02	-0,06	0,11*
	p	,000	,347	,158	,037
Total	r	0,37*	0,23*	0,25*	0,47*
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000

\* $p < .05$

**Third Sub-Problem:** Is there a difference between teachers 'sense of humour and teacher candidates' sense of humour?

Table 4 shows that whether there is a significant difference between the sub-factors of the sense of humour scale and their feelings of humour in general. With the consideration  $t(706)=2,09$  and  $p=,037 < .05$  values, it was found that there a meaningful difference between teachers' sense of humour ( $=18,38$ ) and preservice teachers' sense of humour( $=18,06$ ). This meaningful difference is due to the fact that teachers' attitudes towards people who produce humour are higher than those of prospective teachers. It is seen that there is no significant difference between the feelings of humour of the teachers and teacher candidates regarding other sub-factors of the sense of humour scale and, in general, in other words, the feelings are equivalent to each other.



**Table 4:** Independent-Samples t-Test Results Regarding the Difference between Teachers 'and Teacher Candidates' Feelings of Humour

	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	sd	p
Producing Humour and Using it for Social Purposes	Teacher	421	27,76	8,36	-1,18	706	,240
	Preservice Teacher	287	28,51	8,33			
Using Humour as a Coping Way	Teacher	421	15,93	4,84	1,46	706	,144
	Preservice Teacher	287	15,38	5,13			
Attitude Towards People Producing Humour	Teacher	421	18,38	1,94	2,09	706	,037*
	Preservice Teacher	287	18,06	2,07			
Evaluating Humour	Teacher	421	6,39	1,93	1,81	706	,071
	Preservice Teacher	287	6,13	1,83			
Total	Teacher	421	68,47	13,29	0,38	706	,706
	Preservice Teacher	287	68,08	13,37			

\*p<,05

**Fourth Sub-Problem:** Is there a difference between teachers 'attitudes towards death and prospective teachers' attitudes towards death?

**Table 5:** Independent-Samples T-Test Results Regarding the Difference between Teachers 'and Preservice Teachers' Attitudes towards Death

	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	sd	p
Neutral Acceptance and Approach Acceptance	Teacher	421	66,62	13,30	0,57	706	,564
	Preservice Teacher	287	66,04	13,21			
Escape Acceptance	Teacher	421	18,46	8,15	-3,39	706	,001*
	Preservice Teacher	287	20,56	7,95			
Death Fear and Avoiding Death	Teacher	421	31,46	11,94	-0,69	706	,491
	Preservice Teacher	287	32,09	12,29			
Total	Teacher	421	116,54	21,53	-1,32	706	,187
	Preservice Teacher	287	118,69	20,81			

\*p<,05

Table 5 displays whether there is a significant difference between the sub-factors of the attitude towards death scale and the overall attitude levels of the teachers and teacher candidates. Thus, a meaningful difference was found between teachers( =18,46), and preservice teachers ( =20,56) on the "Escape Acceptance" sub-factor of death attitude scale with the consideration of  $t(706)=-3,39$  values according to  $p=,001<,05$ . This significant difference is due to the lower attitudes of teachers to accept escape than the attitudes of preservice teachers. It is possible to say that the attitudes are equivalent to each other because there is no significant difference between the attitudes of the teachers and teacher candidates regarding the other sub-factors of the scale of attitude towards death.

#### 4. Discussion

The aim of this study is to reveal the relationship between teachers and preservice teachers' feelings of humour and attitudes towards death. For this purpose, data were

collected from teachers and teacher candidates. According to the results of the study, a positive relationship was revealed between teachers 'and teacher candidates' feelings of humour and their attitudes towards death. When the sub-dimensions of the sense of humour are examined, a positive relationship was found between the sub-dimensions of producing humour and social purposes, using humour as a way of coping, their attitudes towards people who produce humour and their attitudes towards death, unlike teachers, in preservice teachers a positive relationship between the humour evaluation sub-dimension and their attitudes towards death was found.

First of all, the relationship between teachers' sense of humour and their attitudes towards death was tried to be revealed. When the sub-dimensions of the sense of humour were evaluated, it was revealed that there was a positive relationship between the teachers' humour production status and their attitude towards death. When the related literature is reviewed, Long and Greenwood (2013) stated that death anxiety is associated with producing humour. In addition to the cultural value of humour production, its function in coping with stress can also explain the relationship between it, and death anxiety (Abel, 2002). Dae Wall and Baumeister (2007) also stated that producing humour takes negative thoughts away from the mind. Considering these studies, it can be thought that the reason why individuals with high production of relationship humour have a positive attitude towards death may be related to the high power of humour in coping with death anxiety.

The positive relationship between humour, another finding of the study, with the aim of coping with the use of humour and death attitudes is also supported by the literature (Craun, Bourke, 2014; Rosenberg, 1991; Vivona, 2013). Thorson (1985) mentions the function of humour in coping with the stress of death anxiety. Humour is a tool used to express love, hate, or stressful situations, and it can be mentioned that even humour with sad content contains optimism. (Ostrower, 2015). Vilaythong et al. (2003) also revealed study results that support these findings. This study, which tries to reveal the relationship between stress and hope, also mentioned humour's functions in reducing stress and increasing people's hopefulness levels. Rnic et al. (2016), on the other hand, in their study on coping with stress and humour styles, stated that humour has a positive effect even though people have adaptive or maladaptive humour styles. Based on these findings, it can be argued that the study results will support the literature. It can be concluded that teachers who use humour as a coping strategy can develop a positive attitude towards death.

Another sub-dimension of humour is related to teachers' attitudes towards people who produce humour, and this sub-dimension has been found to be positively associated with some sub-dimensions of the attitude towards death scale. The attitude towards humour and people who produce humour differ in every culture. While humour is welcomed in Western societies, people who produce humour are not welcomed in Asian communities such as China and laughing out loud is also annoying in such societies (Yue et al., 2016). Looking at Yılmaz's (2019) study with preschool teachers, it was seen that teachers defined children who produce humour as naughty and children who do not

produce humour as compatible. From this point of view, it can be said that we show similarities with Asian societies in terms of humour production. However, when the results of this study were examined, it was seen that people who showed a positive attitude towards people who produce humour had positive attitudes towards death. In this case, it can be mentioned that not only humour but also positive attitude towards people who produce humour has a significant positive effect on dealing with death anxiety. Considering the sub-dimensions associated with the sense of humour and their positive attitudes towards their attitudes towards death, the attitude between the general sense of humour and the attitude towards death can be shown as a source for the possible effects of humour on death anxiety.

In addition to the data collected from teachers, the relationship between teacher candidates' sense of humour and their attitudes towards death was also examined. According to the results of the study, a positive correlation was found between teacher candidates' humour production, using humour as a way of coping, attitudes towards people who produce humour, and attitudes towards death, which are sub-dimensions of humour as well as teachers. Different from teachers, another sub-dimension of humour assessment sub-dimension was found to be positively associated with the attitude towards death. What kind of humour people like can give information about their psychological health (Fry, 1979). Folkman and Lazarus (1985) also revealed that humour assessment is effective in coping with stress. From this point on, it can be said that other studies in the literature support the relationship between dealing with the stress situation created by death anxiety and evaluating humour.

Another finding of the study is to compare teachers' and preservice teachers' feelings of humour. Regarding the sub-dimensions of the sense of humour, there was no difference between the humour feelings of the teachers and teacher candidates, except for the "Attitude towards Humour Producers" sub-dimension. In addition to producing humour, understanding and accepting others' humour is important for the development of their own humour skills (James, 1993). As revealed in the study of Tajeddin and Alemi (2019), teachers and teacher candidates may differ in many points. This is because the experiences of teachers affect both their education style and character traits (Desimon et al., 2002). The use of humour in the classroom is also closely related to the teachers' sense of humour, and it is also useful in the development of their sense of humour (Torok et al., 2004). Using humour, which is an effective tool to increase the quality of the teaching and having more experience related to humour, can be seen as the source of the difference in the study.

The last finding of the study is to examine the attitudes of teachers and teacher candidates towards death. This finding shows that teachers got lower scores on the sub-dimension of "Escape Acceptance" which is about individuals seeing death as physical or psychological salvation (Kösae et al., 2019). Many variables may have an effect on developing different attitudes towards death anxiety. When looking at the studies in the literature, some of these variables are culture (Tang et al., 2002), gender (Fortner & Neimeyer, 1999; Schumaker et al., 1988; Suhail & Akram, 2002) and age (Corr et al., 2003;

Feifel & Nagy, 1981; Maiden & Walker, 1985; Kastenbaum, 2007). In order to make sense of the difference between teachers and teacher candidates, studies on the age variable can be cited as an example. According to Suhail and Akram (2002), as age increases, the death anxiety of people also increases.

According to the literature, humour is an effective tool for people to cope with stress (Abel, 2002; Martin et al., 1993; Safraner & Schill, 1982). Stress towards death is also one of the areas where humour can be useful. (Lefcourt & Thomas, 1998; O'Connell, 1968; Richman, 2007). This study also revealed findings that support the literature. The positive relationship between teachers and prospective teachers' feelings of humour and their attitudes towards death can be interpreted as the importance of teachers' and preservice teachers' feelings of humour in terms of death anxiety. The study results will demonstrate the importance of developing a sense of humour, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic, when death anxiety increases. The effect of improvement can be resulted with not only teachers' and preschool teachers' psychological situation but also their teaching and their effect on children's perspectives on death.

## 5. Suggestions

These findings can provide some suggestions to teachers and prospective teachers. Considering the suggestions for teachers, teachers' effective use of humour in educational environments may make it easier for them to cope with stress and contribute to their children's socialisation skills. Therefore, teachers can be supported with in-service training on this subject. When teachers bring humour to their classrooms as a teaching method, children's learning environments may become enriched and enjoyable. This mediates children's positive attitude towards school. Thus, researching the educational value of humour may help better plan the education in terms of both the student and the environment. The concept of a successful teacher goes beyond just knowing and applying what s/he knows. A successful teacher means a teacher who supports her/his students to have a positive attitude towards learning and does not neglect to make learning easier while making it fun. In this sense, supportive training should be given to both prospective teachers and teachers. In this way, teachers can use humour to increase their effects on children as well as contribute to the development of their thinking skills.

When looked at the suggestions for prospective teachers, they should be supported during their teaching practises so that children can do more activities that improve their sense of humour. It should be ensured that the teacher candidates prepare plans to develop their sense of humour. In this way, children's critical thinking skills might be improved through humour, as well as prospective teachers' levels of using humour in educational environments may increase. If teacher candidates use humour more, it will not only contribute to coping with death anxiety, but also to keep their attitude towards learning and be in better psychosocial situation. In addition, since teacher candidates will have experienced the mediating effect of humour in the classroom environment, this will make an important contribution to their social relations.

In addition, this study can lead to future studies. In this study, a positive relationship was found between sense of humour and attitude towards death using quantitative methods. Although the study reveals a relationship between sense of humour and attitude towards death, quantitative methods can also be used in addition to qualitative methods to indicate the reasons for this relationship. By observing the sense of humour of teachers and teacher candidates in the classroom environment, studies can be planned to reveal humour's effect on their relationship with children and whether they use humour in stressful situations. In addition to the sense of humour, examining the humour styles of teachers will also give detailed information about the types of humour used. Finally, by planning activities aimed at developing a sense of humour, not only death anxiety but also its effect on all negative emotions that teachers and teacher candidates may experience can be revealed in more detail.

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