

# Investigation of self-compassion, self-confidence and submissive behaviors of nursing students studying in different curriculums



Şahizer Eraydın<sup>a,\*</sup>, Şerife Karagözoğlu<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Nursing Department, Tokat, Turkey

<sup>b</sup> Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Health Sciences, Nursing Department, Sivas, Turkey

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Today, nursing education which educates the future members of the nursing profession aims to gain them high self-esteem, self-confidence and self-compassion, independence, assertiveness and ability to establish good human relations. This aim can only be achieved through a contemporary curriculum supporting students in the educational process and enabling those in charge to make arrangements by taking the characters and needs of each individual into account.

**Objective:** The study aims to investigate self-compassion, self-confidence and submissive behaviours of undergraduate nursing students studying in different curriculums.

**Methods:** This descriptive, cross-sectional, comparative study was carried out with the 1st- and 4th-year students of the three schools, each of which has a different curriculum: conventional, integrated and Problem Based Learning (PBL). The study data were collected with the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), Self-Confidence Scale (CS) and Submissive Acts Scale (SAS). The data were analyzed through frequency distribution, means, analysis of variance and the significance test for the difference between the two means.

**Results:** The mean scores the participating students obtained from the Self-Compassion, Self-confidence and Submissive Acts Scales were  $3.31 \pm 0.56$ ,  $131.98 \pm 20.85$  and  $36.48 \pm 11.43$  respectively. The integrated program students' mean self-compassion and self-confidence scores were statistically significantly higher and their mean submissive behaviour scores were lower than were those of the students studying in the other two programs ( $p < 0.05$ ). The analysis of the correlation between the mean scores obtained from the scales revealed that there was a statistically significant relationships between the SCS and CS values ( $r = 0.388$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), between the SCS and SAS values ( $r = -0.307$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and between the CS and SAS values ( $r = -0.325$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** In line with the study results, it can be said that the participating nursing students tended to display moderate levels of self-compassion, self-confidence and submissive behaviours, and that the self-compassion and self-confidence scores of the 4th-year students in the integrated program were higher than were those of the students in the other two programs.

## 1. Introduction

Self-compassion is defined as an individual being open to feelings causing him/her to suffer, displaying attentive and affectionate approaches towards himself/herself, being tolerant of his/her failures and inadequacies, and accepting negative experiences as a natural process of human life (Neff, 2003a, 2003b). In this context, self-compassion consists of three basic elements: (Akin, 2007) self-kindness, (Akin et al., 2007) common humanity, and (Akin, 2009) mindfulness (Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Neff et al., 2005; Akin et al., 2007). Self-confidence is a person's belief in his/her own strengths and abilities and having the courage to

take action regarding his/her skills, values, and goals (Gökner, 2007; White, 2009). Individuals with low self-confidence need others' approval and appreciation in order to feel successful, perceive themselves as unsuccessful and worthless, and believe that they cannot solve the problems of everyday life (Nelson-Laird, 2005; Gilbert and Procter, 2006; Özcan, 2006).

Individuals displaying submissive behaviour perceive themselves as less valued and less important. They cannot freely express their ideas that are different from those of others, they have difficulty saying no, they cannot display leadership behaviours, they cannot easily take initiative, and they avoid taking responsibility or adopting changes

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [sahizer.eraaydin@gop.edu.tr](mailto:sahizer.eraaydin@gop.edu.tr) (Ş. Eraydın).

(Mete and Çetinkaya, 2005; Gilbert and Procter, 2006; Özcan, 2006; Arslan Özkan and Özen, 2008). If a person displaying a submissive behaviour is to get rid of this behaviour, he/she should find out the causes of this behaviour and raise self-awareness through insight. A person's establishing a healthy relationship with himself/herself plays an important role in increasing awareness through insight. A person's increasing his/her self-compassion and self-confidence might contribute to this. It has been reported that self-compassion has a powerful motivational impact on individuals and that a self-compassionate person has the courage to fulfil behaviours he/she has to display (Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Nelson-Laird, 2005; Akin, 2007; White, 2009).

In nursing education, while on the one hand students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and understanding regarding the nursing profession are developed, on the other hand, their personality traits that will contribute to their being a professional member of nursing are developed. In order for nurses to fulfil their tasks as professional members of nursing, they are supposed to have developed personality traits (Kaya et al., 2005; Karadağ and Uçan, 2006; Heffernan et al., 2010). However, in several studies, nursing students were determined to have low self-confidence (Brown et al., 2003; Lundberg, 2008; Kukulcu et al., 2013) and to display submissive behaviours more (Mete and Çetinkaya, 2005; Arslan Özkan and Özen, 2008). Low levels of self-confidence and high levels of submissiveness among nursing students lead to the inability to develop themselves, feelings of unsuccessfulness and worthlessness, and lack of assertiveness (Mete and Çetinkaya, 2005; Gilbert and Procter, 2006; Özcan, 2006; Arslan Özkan and Özen, 2008). However, as the member of a health care team, a professional nurse is expected to have self-confidence and assertiveness, to advocate for patients' rights, and to strengthen his/her leadership qualifications (Jarzemsky and McGrath, 2008; Brown and Chronister, 2009).

Nursing education aims to educate students as members of the nursing profession to have high self-worth, self-confidence, and a strong sense of responsibility towards themselves and human life and to be able to establish good human relationships (Karaöz, 2003; Şirin et al., 2008). Therefore, if students' self-confidence is to be increased and submissiveness is to be reduced, their self-compassion should be increased. In several studies, self-compassion was determined to be positively correlated with life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Neff, 2003a; Neff, 2004) and negatively correlated with submissive behaviours and depression (Gilbert and Procter, 2006; Akin, 2009, 2010). People with high self-compassion are reported to be open to their own thoughts and feelings, understanding about their failures, and having self-confidence for behaviours they need (Neff, 2003a). Therefore, contemporary curricula that support students, promote their personal traits, and are open to novelties by considering their personal characteristics are of vital importance in educating professional nurses of the future.

Successful experiences at school contribute first to the development of positive academic self-confidence and then to the development of overall self-confidence. Raising students' awareness regarding their personality traits and behaviour patterns during the educational process will make them self-compassionate, enable them to discover their own strengths and weaknesses, and help them improve themselves. Thus, nurses who are trained to be more compassionate not only to society but also to themselves will have the courage to take more responsibility for the nursing profession.

Our review of the literature revealed that there was a gap in the literature related to studies investigating the effects of different curricula implemented in nursing schools on students' self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours. Therefore, there is a need for further studies investigating how different curricula affect nursing students' personality traits and behaviour patterns. The purpose of this study was to investigate self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours in nursing students studying at schools with different types of curricula. The study is thought to contribute to the reconsi-

deration of the different nursing curricula and the preparation of new regulations in line with the requirements in Turkey by investigating self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours among nursing students.

## 2. Features of the Curricula in Turkey

Today, there are 3 different curricula in nursing education in Turkey. One is the problem-based learning (PBL) model. In the PBL model, students are assigned to 10–12-person working groups. Students identify the learning needs related to the problem and try to solve the nursing problems they encounter by developing their knowledge, skills, and attitudes through research. The role of the instructor is to guide and support the students while they solve the problems in the learning process (Dunlap, 2005; Williams and Beattie, 2008). During most of the fourth year of education in the PBL model, students pursue their internship in the actual application environment, which contributes to the development of their knowledge, skills, and understanding (Mete and Uysal, 2009).

The second type of curriculum implemented in nursing education is the integrated curriculum. In the integrated curriculum, courses contain modules on health and diseases. Topics related to nursing care are organised to include basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to the subject area. Clinical practices usually start in the second year. Students in the integrated curriculum also pursue their internship training in the fourth year (Tosun et al., 2008; Sabancıoğulları et al., 2012).

In the integrated and PBL curricula, education is given in small groups; thus, relationships between students and teachers are closer, friendlier, and more satisfactory. In these programs, students are able to express themselves better, teachers know students more closely, the topics are already learned, and the missing points are discussed until a consensus is reached. Therefore, students recognise their responsibility to learn and can identify the learning needs by themselves.

The curriculum that has been widely implemented in nursing education in Turkey so far is the conventional curriculum. Courses in this model are given in blocks on consecutive days. After students receive theoretical knowledge on basic professional topics, they practice their knowledge in clinical settings. Clinical practices begin in the first year and implementation areas are determined in accordance with the content of the course (Bektas, 2004). All the students enrolled in the same course in the classical curriculum take courses in the same classroom. Thus, the number of students in a classroom can be between 100 and 150 or even more. While teachers play an active role, students are passive receivers. In clinical practices, students are divided into groups.

The nursing schools of the 3 universities had similar physical infrastructures and faculty characteristics at the time the study was conducted. The characteristics of the faculty members working in all universities, and the physical structure, and the curricula of these universities were screened. After this screening, the 3 schools were selected to conduct the study.

## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1. Study Design

The study was designed as a descriptive cross-sectional, comparative study.

### 3.2. Research Questions

Are there differences between the self-compassion levels of students studying in different curricula?

Are there differences between the self-confidence levels of students studying in different curricula?

Are there differences between the submissive behaviour levels of students studying in different curricula?

### 3.3. Study Population and Sample

This descriptive, cross-sectional, comparative study was targeted to include 542 first- and fourth-year students attending nursing departments of 3 universities where education was given through conventional, integrated, and PBL curricula. Of the 542 students, 523 who agreed to participate in the study comprised the study sample. Of the 523 students in the sample, 11 who changed their minds and refused to participate and 8 who failed to fill out the questionnaires were excluded. The study participation rate was 96.49%.

In Turkey, an academic year in higher education is divided into 2 terms, the fall and spring terms. This research was conducted during the spring term. Students register at the beginning of the term and take compulsory and elective courses. If students do not continue compulsory courses, they can fail. To legally prove that they attended the course, students sign a form. In the 3 nursing schools, the first- and fourth-year students participated in the research practices during the compulsory courses. That is why almost all of the students were included.

### 3.4. Data Collection Tools

The study data were collected using the Personal Information Form, the Self-Compassion Scale, the Self-Confidence Scale, and the Submissive Acts Scale.

#### 3.4.1. The Personal Information Form

This form included 5 items questioning the students' schools, age, gender, year at school, and whether they chose the school on their own preference.

#### 3.4.2. The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

This scale developed by Neff (2003b) is a measurement tool investigating psychological health. The scale includes 26 items and is a 5-point Likert-type scale: (Akin, 2007) Never, (Akin et al., 2007) Rarely, (Akin, 2009) Often, (Akin, 2010) Generally, and (Arslan Özkan and Özen, 2008) Always.

To calculate a person's self-compassion level, the total score obtained from the scale is divided by the number of items on the scale. Scores between 1 and 2.5 points indicate low levels of self-compassion, scores between 2.5 and 3.5 points indicate moderate levels of self-compassion, and scores between 3.5 and 5 show high levels of self-compassion. Akin et al. (2007) adapted the scale for Turkey and carried out its reliability and validity analysis and determined the scale's internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) value as 0.76. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale in the present study was 0.81, indicating that the scale had a high level of reliability.

#### 3.4.3. The Self-Confidence Scale (CS)

The scale developed by Akin (2007) can be administered to adolescents and adults in areas such as education and psychology. The 33-item scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale: (Akin, 2007) Never, (Akin et al., 2007) Rarely, (Akin, 2009) Often, (Akin, 2010) Generally, and (Arslan Özkan and Özen, 2008) Always. A person's self-confidence level is calculated by dividing the total score obtained from the scale by the number of items on the scale. Scores lower than 2.5 points indicate low levels of self-confidence, scores between 2.5 and 3.5 points indicate moderate levels of self-confidence, and scores above 3.5 show high levels of self-confidence. Akin determined the Cronbach's alpha value of the CS as 0.83. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale in the present study was 0.95, indicating that the scale had a high level of reliability.

#### 3.4.4. The Submissive Acts Scale (SAS)

This scale developed by Gilbert and Allan (1984) can be administered to adolescents and adults. It is used to assess submissive behaviours (Savaşır and Şahin, 1997). The 16-item scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale: (Akin, 2007) "this is a very bad description of me," (Akin et al., 2007) "this is a somewhat description of me," (Akin, 2009) "this is a moderately good description of me," (Akin, 2010) "this is a good description of me," and (Arslan Özkan and Özen, 2008) "this is a very good description of me." Higher scores indicate that the tendency towards submissive behaviours is high. Şahin and Şahin (1992) adapted the scale for Turkey and carried out its reliability and validity analysis and determined the scale's internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) value as 0.74. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale in the present study was 0.88, indicating that the scale had a high level of reliability.

**3.4.4.1. Data Collection.** The study was performed in April and May during the 2009–2010 school year. The forms were handed out to the students in each school who volunteered to participate in the study after they were given information about it. It took the students in each group approximately 20–25 min to fill in the forms.

**3.4.4.2. Data Evaluation.** The study data were evaluated using the SPSS 15 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Frequency distribution was used for the evaluation of the students' individual characteristics, arithmetic means were used to calculate the mean scores obtained from the scales, and analysis of variance and the significance test for the difference between the 2 means were used for the comparative analysis. A *P* value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

**3.4.4.3. Ethical Aspects of the Study.** To conduct the study, the approval of the Ethics Committee (22/04/2009, decision number: B.30.2DEÜ.0Y3.02.05/593) and the permissions of the university presidencies were obtained. Prior to the implementation of the data collection tools, the students were told that participation was completely voluntary and that the data collected would only be used within the scope of the study and would be kept confidential. They were also asked not to write any personally identifiable information on the form. Then their verbal informed consent was obtained. Of the students, those who volunteered were included in the study. Survey forms were given to the students. It took each group of the students about 20–25 min to fill in the forms.

**3.4.4.4. Limitations of the Study.** Since the study was cross-sectional and was conducted with a limited number of students and programs, the results cannot be generalised to the entire population, which was the limitation of the study.

## 4. Results

The mean age of the students who participated in the study was  $21.06 \pm 1.82$ , and 84.9% of them were female. Of the students, 35.2% had the conventional, 34.8% had the integrated, and 30.0% had the PBL education. Of the students surveyed, 61.6% were first-year students and 58.7% stated that they selected their study area by their own preference. Of the fourth-year students who participated in the survey, 31.8% had the conventional, 37.8% had the integrated, and 30.3% had the PBL education (Table 1).

The SCS scores of the students in the present study participating in the conventional, integrated, and PBL curricula were  $3.13 \pm 0.47$ ,  $3.46 \pm 0.61$ , and  $3.35 \pm 0.55$ , respectively. The students' mean CS scores were  $127.11 \pm 22.01$ ,  $136.76 \pm 18.59$ , and  $132.13 \pm 20.74$ , respectively. Their mean SAS scores were  $38.24 \pm 10.95$ ,  $33.37 \pm 10.65$ , and  $38.02 \pm 12.17$ , respectively (Table 3). The analysis of the relationship between the mean scores obtained from the scales revealed a positive, weak relationship between the SCS and

**Table 1**  
Descriptive characteristics (n = 523).

	Number	%
<b>Curriculums</b>		
Conventional	184	35.2
Integrated	182	34.8
PBL	152	30.0
<b>Class</b>		
1st-year	322	61.6
4th-year	201	38.4
<b>Conventional program</b>		
1st-year	120	37.3
4th-year	64	31.8
<b>Integrated program</b>		
1st-year	106	32.9
4th-year	76	37.8
<b>PBL program</b>		
1st-year	96	29.8
4th-year	61	30.3
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	444	84.9
Male	79	15.1

CS scores ( $r = 0.388, P < 0.001$ ) and a negative, weak relationship between the SCS and SAS scores ( $r = -0.307, P < 0.001$ ) and between the CS and SAS scores ( $r = -0.325, P < 0.001$ ).

When the mean scores the students obtained from the scales were analyzed by their year at school, the scores the first-year students obtained for the self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours were  $3.14 \pm 0.46, 126.33 \pm 23.10,$  and  $38.70 \pm 11.23$  in the conventional program;  $3.31 \pm 0.60, 129.03 \pm 17.27,$  and  $39.14 \pm 9.17$  in the integrated program; and  $3.30 \pm 0.54, 130.14 \pm 19.51,$  and  $39.32 \pm 11.89$  in the PBL program, respectively. The scores the fourth-year students obtained for the self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours were  $3.11 \pm 0.48, 128.58 \pm 19.90,$  and  $37.39 \pm 10.45$  in the conventional program;  $3.66 \pm 0.58, 147.57 \pm 14.64,$  and  $25.33 \pm 6.59$  in the integrated program; and  $3.43 \pm 0.56, 135.28 \pm 22.37,$  and  $35.97 \pm 12.43$  in the PBL program, respectively. While there were statistically significant differences between the mean self-compassion scores of the first-year students in the 3 different curricula ( $P < 0.05$ ), the differences between their mean self-confidence scores and between submissive behaviour scores were not significant ( $P > 0.05$ ) (Table 4 or Fig. 1). However, the differences between the self-compassion scores, between the self-confidence scores, and between the submissive behaviour scores of the fourth-year students in the 3 different curricula were statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

The first- and fourth-year integrated program students' mean scores were  $3.66 \pm 0.58$  and  $3.31 \pm 0.60$  for the SCS ( $P < 0.001$ ),  $147.57 \pm 14.64$  and  $129.03 \pm 17.27$  for the CS ( $P < 0.001$ ), and  $25.33 \pm 6.59$  and  $39.14 \pm 9.17$  for the SAS ( $P < 0.001$ ). The differences between the mean scores were statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). However, the differences between the mean scores of the first- and fourth-year students in the conventional and PBL programs were not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ) (Table 4 or Fig. 1).

In the present study, while there were no statistically significant differences between the mean self-compassion scores of the female and male students ( $P > 0.05$ ), there were statistically significant differences between their mean self-confidence scores ( $132.80 \pm 20.52$  and  $126.98 \pm 21.13$ , respectively;  $P < 0.042$ ) and submissive behaviour scores ( $35.35 \pm 11.12$  and  $42.82 \pm 11.22$ , respectively;  $P < 0.001$ ) ( $P < 0.05$ ) (Table 5 or Fig. 2).

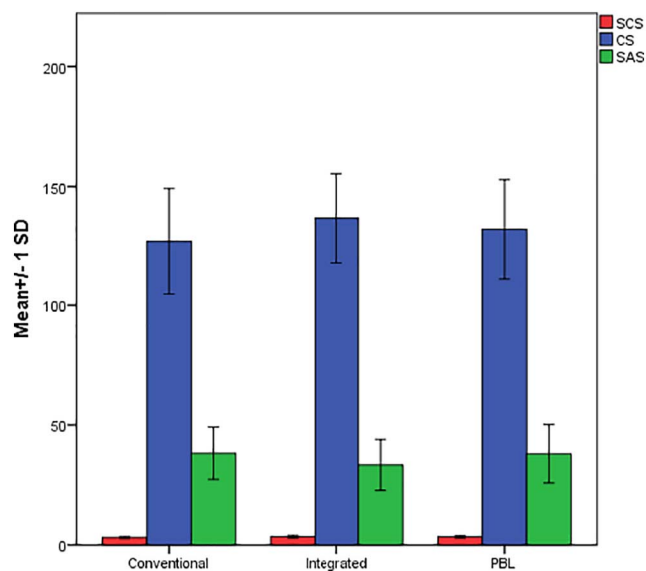


Fig. 1. Distribution of total and subscale mean scores the nursing students obtained from the self-compassion scale, self-confidence scale and submissive acts scale in terms of their grades at school.

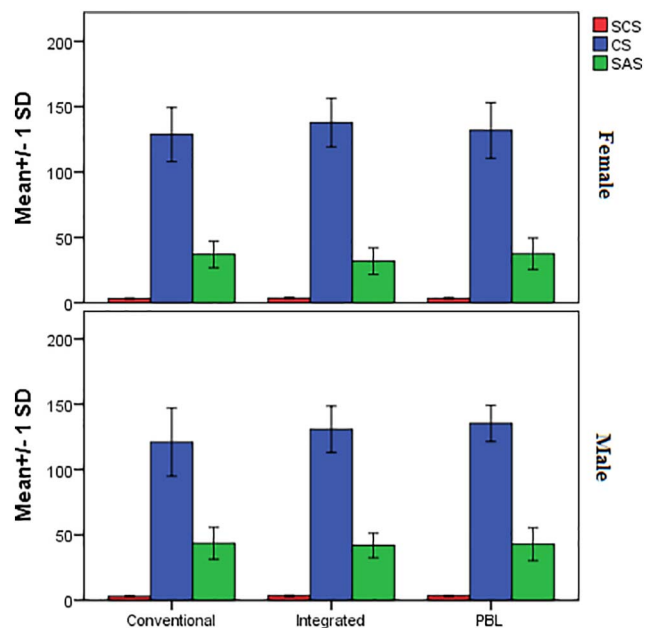


Fig. 2. Distribution of total and subscale mean scores the nursing students obtained from the self-compassion scale, self-confidence scale and submissive acts scale in terms of gender and selecting the profession of their own free will.

### 5. Discussion

In this present study conducted to investigate self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours of the nursing students studying in different curricula, given the range of the scores the nursing students obtained from the scales, it can be said that they had moderate levels of self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours (Table 2).

In the literature, there are different study findings; some are in parallel with and some are contrary to our results. As in the present study, in Şenyuva et al.'s study (2014) of nursing students and in Crocker and Canevello (2008), university students were determined to have moderate levels of self-compassion. Kukulcu et al. (2013) determined that self-confidence levels of nursing students were moderate but lower than those of other college students. On the other hand, Brown et al. (2003) and Lundberg (2008) found that the nursing students' self-

**Table 2**

Distribution of total mean scores the nursing students obtained from the self-compassion scale, self-confidence scale and submissive acts scale.

Scales/subscales	Min	Max	X ± SD
SCS	1.93(1.00)*	4.85(5.00)*	3.31 ± 0.56
CS	55.00(33.00)*	165.00(165.00)*	131.98 ± 20.85
SAS	16.00(16.00)*	80.00(80.00)*	36.48 ± 11.43

\* Minimum and maximum values to be obtained from the scales.

confidence levels were low. Similar to the findings of the present study, [Mete and Çetinkaya \(2005\)](#), and [Arslan Özkan and Özen \(2008\)](#) determined that nursing students displayed moderate levels of submissive behaviours. However, having high levels of self-compassion and self-confidence and low levels of submissive behaviours, being open to changes and developments, displaying conscious, understanding, self-directed, collaborative, and unprejudiced attitudes and behaviours towards themselves and others, being aware of their own powers and abilities, taking pleasure in learning, and being able to establish effective, constructive interpersonal communication are the personality traits nursing students are expected to have if they are to be professional members of the nursing field. One of the basic and indispensable goals of nursing education is to help students develop such personality traits. Thus, based on the findings of the present study, it can be said that the current curricula did not satisfactorily contribute to the development of such personality traits in the students who participated in this study.

In the present study, analysis of the relationship between the mean scores the students obtained from the self-compassion and self-confidence scales revealed a positive correlation. This result may suggest that increased levels of self-compassion lead to increased levels of self-confidence, or in other words, high levels of self-confidence bring about high levels of self-compassion among nursing students. On the other hand, in the present study, submissive behaviours were determined to have a negative relationship both with self-compassion and with self-confidence. In line with the findings of the present study, it can be said that self-compassion and self-confidence increase as submissive behaviours decrease in nursing students or, in other words, self-compassion and self-confidence decrease as submissive behaviours increase. While in [Akin's study of university students \(2009\)](#), there was a negative correlation between the students' self-compassion and submissive behaviour levels, in [Gilbert and Procter \(2006\)](#), the self-compassion training significantly decreased a person's shyness and feeling of inferiority and tendency towards submissive behaviours. Both studies supported the results of the present study.

In the present study, the comparison of the mean scores the students obtained from the self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours scales in terms of their curricula revealed that the students in the conventional curriculum had lower self-compassion and self-confidence scores and displayed submissive behaviours more than did the students in the other 2 curricula. However, the students in the integrated program had higher self-compassion and self-confidence scores and tended to display submissive behaviours less than did the students in the other 2 programs ([Table 3](#)). [Brown et al. \(2003\)](#) reported

**Table 3**

Distribution of total and subscale mean scores the nursing students obtained from the self-compassion scale, self-confidence scale and submissive acts scale in terms of their curriculums.

Scales	Conventional X ± SD	Integrated X ± SD	PBL X ± SD	p
SCS	3.13 ± 0.47	3.46 ± 0.61	3.35 ± 0.55	< 0.001
CS	127.11 ± 22.01	136.76 ± 18.59	132.13 ± 20.74	< 0.001
SAS	38.24 ± 10.95	33.37 ± 10.65	38.02 ± 12.17	< 0.001

that the curriculum affected nursing students' self-confidence. While [White \(2009\)](#) reported the importance of learning experiences in gaining self-confidence, [Crooks et al. \(2005\)](#) found that students gained more experiences if the training was given in small groups and that they improved their self-confidence if they acquired their knowledge and skills in a supportive environment. Given that the nursing students in this present study gained different educational experiences in different curricula, it is normal to expect that they had varying levels of self-compassion and self-confidence and tended to display submissive behaviours at different levels. In nursing education given through the conventional curriculum, students cannot attend educational activities sufficiently since they are assigned to large groups, and suitable arrangements in line with their individual characteristics cannot be made. Therefore, it can be assumed that students cannot sufficiently develop positive personality traits. On the other hand, students in the integrated programs have the opportunity to learn more and to perform experiments more since they are assigned to smaller groups and use active learning methods, which helps them to improve their problem-solving, critical-thinking, autonomy, leadership, and decision-making skills they can use in their daily and professional lives; this thus enhances their self-compassion and self-confidence levels and enables them to display fewer submissive behaviours.

In the present study, the comparison of the mean scores the students obtained from the self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviour scales in terms of their years at school revealed that the first-year students in all the curricula obtained similar scores from the 3 scales at the beginning of their education and that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores for these personality traits ( $P > 0.05$ ) ([Table 4](#) or [Fig. 1](#)). This finding is quite striking since it indicates that students having education in different curricula have similar characteristics in terms of their self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviour levels at the beginning of training and thus they start their education on equal terms.

In Turkey, those who want higher education should take the nationwide University Entrance Examination. Students choose the fields they want to major in based on their scores from the University Entrance Examination and are assigned to the field by the State Test Centre. The scores obtained from the University Entrance Examination are close to each other for the fields in the same category. Therefore, first-year nursing students' knowledge levels and learning capacities are similar. However, only the fourth-year students in the integrated program statistically significantly increased their mean scores ( $P < 0.05$ ) and had higher self-compassion and self-confidence levels and lower tendency towards submissive behaviours than did the students in the other 2 programs ([Table 4](#) or [Fig. 1](#)).

The goal of the education programs is to significantly improve students' personality traits at the end of the educational process. However, the intra-group comparison of the mean scores obtained by the first- and fourth-year students in each curriculum in the present study indicated that while there were no statistically significant differences between the first- and fourth-year students' scores in the conventional and PBL programs ( $P > 0.05$ ), the difference between the mean scores obtained by the first- and fourth-year students in the integrated program was statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) and they had higher self-compassion and self-confidence levels and lower tendency towards submissive behaviours than did the students in the other 2 programs ([Table 4](#) or [Fig. 1](#)). Our search for studies investigating self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours in nursing students studying in different curricula demonstrated that there were very few studies on the issue in the literature. In 1 of these studies, [Şenyuva et al. \(2014\)](#) stated that nursing students' self-compassion would be enhanced through training. [Nelson-Laird \(2005\)](#) emphasised that a successful training process would not only promote individuals' academic self-confidence, but also their self-confidence in general. In [Mete and Çetinkaya \(2005\)](#), fourth-year nursing students' tendency towards submissive behaviours was lower than that of first-year nursing

**Table 4**

Distribution of total and subscale mean scores the nursing students obtained from the self-compassion scale, self-confidence scale and submissive acts scale in terms of their grades at school.

	Year	Conventional X ± SD	Integrated X ± SD	PBL X ± SD	p
SCS	1st-year	3.14 ± 0.46	3.31 ± 0.60	3.30 ± 0.54	0.025
	4th-year	3.11 ± 0.48	3.66 ± 0.58	3.43 ± 0.56	< 0.001
	p	0.601	< 0.001	0.148	
CS	1st-year	126.33 ± 23.10	129.03 ± 17.27	130.14 ± 19.51	0.359
	4th-year	128.58 ± 19.90	147.57 ± 14.64	135.28 ± 22.37	< 0.001
	p	0.511	< 0.001	0.131	
SAS	1st-year	38.70 ± 11.23	39.14 ± 9.17	39.32 ± 11.89	0.908
	4th-year	37.39 ± 10.45	25.33 ± 6.59	35.97 ± 12.43	< 0.001
	p	0.441	< 0.001	0.092	

**Table 5**

Distribution of total and subscale mean scores the nursing students obtained from the self-compassion scale, self-confidence scale and submissive acts scale in terms of gender and selecting the profession of their own free will.

		Year	Conventional X ± SD	Integrated X ± SD	PBL X ± SD	p
Female	SCS	1st-year	3.18 ± 0.49	3.30 ± 0.60	3.29 ± 0.56	0.300
		4th-year	3.11 ± 0.48	3.66 ± 0.58	3.43 ± 0.56	< 0.001
		p	0.342	< 0.001	0.141	
	CS	1st-year	128.73 ± 21.38	128.38 ± 17.15	129.26 ± 20.25	0.961
		4th-year	128.58 ± 19.90	147.57 ± 14.64	135.28 ± 22.37	< 0.001
		p	0.964	< 0.001	0.095	
	SAS	1st-year	36.55 ± 10.14	38.15 ± 8.92	38.72 ± 11.75	0.381
		4th-year	37.39 ± 10.45	25.33 ± 6.59	35.97 ± 12.43	< 0.001
		p	0.625	< 0.001	0.179	
Male	SCS	1st-year	3.06 ± 0.38	3.35 ± 0.59	3.36 ± 0.41	0.022
	CS	1st-year	120.95 ± 26.06	130.82 ± 17.78	125.29 ± 13.84	0.60
	SAS	1st-year	43.51 ± 12.16	41.89 ± 9.45	42.86 ± 12.53	0.850

students.

When the present study was conducted, there were no male students among the fourth-year students. Therefore, only the first-year students were compared in terms of gender, and the female students were determined to have higher self-confidence scores and lower submissive behaviour scores (Table 5 or Fig. 2). Although it varies from 1 culture to another, obedience to authority in the family and society is often considered as a sign of respect and female children especially are taught that obedience is a positive behaviour (Ökten, 2009; Kaymaz, 2010). However, in line with the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that female students who struggle hard to have equal opportunities as their male counterparts and to work under the same conditions in their profession can increase their self-confidence and tend to display submissive behaviours less after having completed a successful educational process. In Yıldırım's (2004), Kaya et al.'s (2004), and Tekin and Filiz's (2008) studies conducted with students, male students were determined to display submissive behaviours more. On the other hand, in Kukulcu et al.' study (2013), male students had higher levels of self-confidence than female students.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this present study conducted to investigate self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours of nursing students studying in different curricula, given the range of the scores, all of the participating nursing students obtained from the scales had moderate levels of self-compassion, self-confidence, and submissive behaviours. Based on the relationships between the mean scores obtained from the scales, it can also be said that the students' tendency towards submissive behaviours decreased as their self-compassion and self-confidence increased.

In the present study, it was determined that students in the integrated program had higher levels of self-compassion and self-confidence and lower tendency towards submissive behaviours than

the students in the other 2 programs ( $P < 0.05$ ). However, it was determined that the self-confidence and submissive behaviour levels of all the first-year students in all of the curricula investigated in the present study were close to each other at the beginning of the training, and that only the fourth-year students had higher levels of self-compassion and self-confidence and lower tendency towards submissive behaviour at the end of their training.

In the present study, the participating female students had higher levels of self-confidence and lower tendency towards submissive behaviours than male students. In line with the findings obtained from the present study, it can be recommended to implement student-centred active learning and teaching methods and approaches in the current nursing curricula, to increase interactions between teachers and students, to create an effective learning environment that gives priority to students' demands and preferences, to enable students to improve their qualifications in critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, leadership, communication, assertiveness, and autonomy by providing them with opportunities to practice more and to gain more experience so that they can develop positive personality traits such as self-compassion and self-confidence. It is also recommended to perform similar studies in larger groups or follow-up studies with students in the same group.

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