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An Exploration of Personally Mediated Racism Among Nursing Students Through the Participant-Driven Photo-Elicitation Method

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, global forced migration due to conflict, violence, and persecution has increased dramatically, affecting numerous countries, with Türkiye being particularly impacted. Despite global trends showing a significant decline in positive attitudes toward refugees, the limited existing literature on racism in nursing education primarily focuses on themes related to white supremacy. This focus inadequately addresses the issue of personally mediated racism toward various ethnic groups, especially within the context of nursing education and research. Considering the ongoing migration influx, it is crucial to examine personally mediated racism and its underlying causes among nursing students in countries most affected by this issue. This study examined personally mediated racism among nursing students toward refugees in Türkiye by creating an environment conducive to productive discussions, utilizing a participant-driven photo-elicitation method. The study identifies two key themes to address gaps in the literature: "The Road to Personally Mediated Racism" and "Uncontrollable Exclusivism," emphasizing the existence of personally mediated racism among nursing students. This study's findings underscore the essential need to integrate antiracist education and promote open discussions about current societal developments and dynamics within nursing education.

1 | Introduction

The number of instances of global forced migration has increased considerably in recent years, primarily driven by conflict, violence, and persecution (Fransen and de Haas 2022). The management of the effects of migration has become a global problem (Kaldık 2021). Türkiye is one of the countries that hosts the largest number of refugees in the world. The country has experienced a multicultural migrant influx since 2011 (UNHCR 2022). According to the official numbers, along with 3.7 million Syrian refugees, 320,000 refugees and people seeking asylum from other countries have entered Türkiye (UNHCR 2022). Research on social trends, conducted at regular intervals, has consistently shown a significant decrease in

the positive attitudes of the Turkish population toward refugee groups, accompanied by a considerable increase in racist behaviors (GAR 2022). Nursing students cannot be viewed separately from society (Altman et al. 2021), as they are individuals who constantly interact with their environment, including its physical, ecological, sociopolitical, and cultural aspects. It is important to explore and discuss the tendencies of nursing students in the context of a changing world and the issue of racism.

To provide context, it is important to note that this study is situated within Türkiye. The author aims to highlight the significant issue of "Personally mediated racism among nursing students" in the context of Türkiye, a country experiencing

substantial migration and its widespread effects. The intention is to stimulate discussion on this topic among nursing students within nursing education.

1.1 | Addressing Personally Mediated Racism in Nursing Education

Race is a classification system delineating human individuals into distinct groups within a particular societal context, primarily founded upon shared physical or social attributes. The term gradually transitioned from delineating phenotypical characteristics to encompassing national affiliations (Bonilla-Silva 1997). Presently, race is acknowledged as a sociocultural construct, denoting an assigned identity dictated by societal conventions (Jones 2000). While it does incorporate physical resemblances among groups, race lacks intrinsic biological significance (Liu and Jones 2024). Moreover, the concept of race serves as a cornerstone for racism, which posits the hierarchical division of humanity based on the purported superiority of certain racial groups over others (Jones 2000). Therefore, understanding the potential effects of racism in shaping race-related disparities is essential.

Racism is a dynamic process that involves new forms of social, political, cultural, or linguistic expression (Omi and Winant 2018). According to Jones (2000), there are three levels for understanding racism: institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized. When most people hear the term "racism," they typically think of personally mediated racism, which can be defined as prejudice and discrimination. Personally mediated racism can occur intentionally or unintentionally and encompasses both actions taken and actions neglected. This type of racism manifests in actions such as disrespect, avoidance in daily interactions, and dehumanizing behavior (Jones 2000). Racism is increasingly recognized as a significant driver of inequities, as it influences various aspects of society, including social dynamics, economic disparities, and the delivery of healthcare (Liu and Jones 2024). To mitigate personally mediated racism and its contribution to systemic racism, individuals must recognize and address their biases; however, broader institutional and structural reforms are also necessary to achieve lasting change (Liu and Jones 2024; Ochs 2023).

The topic of personally mediated racism among nursing students has not received significant attention (Bell 2021; Koch 2021; Pusey-Reid and Blackman-Richards 2022; Tilki 2007). In contrast, professional discussions and curricula in nursing education predominantly revolve around cultural competence, and the issue of racism is mostly neglected (Hantke et al. 2022; Odzakovic et al. 2023). According to Fatahi et al. (2023), a significant number of institutions have not yet officially defined racism or antiracism, nor have they put in place a framework to develop educational initiatives. Nursing education has not explicitly addressed antiracism (Hantke et al. 2022); however, it must intentionally focus on integrating antiracist content into its curricula (Playfair et al. 2023). The literature suggests that much of the research addressing "racism" in nursing education is focused on themes related to white supremacy (Bell 2021; Harding 2021).

1.2 | Personally Mediated Racism in Nursing Education From a Türkiye Perspective

During the Arab Spring, civil wars led to mass migrations, resulting in new waves of refugees that impacted the entire world. The most severe consequences of the Arab Spring were seen in Syria, which had a significant effect on Türkiye due to the forced mass migration of Syrians. Besides Syrians, Türkiye also hosts many refugees and people seeking asylum from other countries (ORSAM 2015). Turkey has experienced various mass migrations, with previous immigrant groups largely assimilated and integrated into Turkish society. However, the influx of Syrian refugees is a unique challenge due to its scale and nature (Makovsky 2019).

In the beginning, during the multicultural wave of migration, Turkey demonstrated hospitality. However, as the number of refugees increased over the years, the country started facing financial and social burdens. The studies conducted in various fields show that there is now a negative tendency among Turkish people against refugees (Aldamen 2023; Ozduzen et al. 2021).

There is a lack of studies specifically addressing racism within nursing education in Türkiye despite the large migration influx. The findings of recent studies consistently validate the existence of negative attitudes (Altawil and Turan 2023; Karadas et al. 2023), underscoring the need to confront and explicitly name the issue of racism directly within nursing education. However, it is important to discuss personally mediated racism and behaviors to recognize and address them promptly. To understand and address these attitudes and behaviors it causes, it is crucial to consider the socioeconomic and political structure in all its dimensions.

There is increasing evidence of negative attitudes among nursing students in Türkiye toward refugee groups, especially in the past 5 years (Akca and Ayaz-Alkaya 2023; Karadas et al. 2023; Kuru Alici 2021; Ozaydin et al. 2021; Türk et al. 2024). However, these studies focused solely on identifying the presence of negative attitudes rather than exploring the underlying reasons within the broader social context and assisting nursing students in recognizing these attitudes. Since individuals both influence and are influenced by a complex array of social factors within their environments (Bronfenbrenner 1986), Kechi et al. (2024) suggest that to effectively examine and mitigate racism in nursing, it is essential to consider the entire societal structure. This holistic understanding could provide educators with insights into the realities of social life and enable them to grasp the broader context and develop more effective strategies for promoting integration and social cohesion. By delving deeply into these root causes, nurse educators, faculty, and policymakers can gain insight into how to devise tailored interventions aimed at fostering empathy, understanding, and inclusivity toward refugees within society.

Nurse educators should be aware that nursing students may be influenced by the attitudes prevalent in the society in which they live (Hantke et al. 2022; Odzakovic et al. 2023; Tilki 2007). Thus, creating an environment that enables nursing students to recognize and confront any racist attitudes and behaviors toward refugees is important (Odzakovic et al. 2023). To achieve this, various methods need to be implemented that can create an environment for productive discussion where students can

freely express their thoughts without the fear of stigmatization. Such open and nonjudgmental platforms might encourage students to reflect on their biases and preconceptions (Hultsjö et al. 2019; Pusey-Reid and Blackman-Richards 2022).

1.3 | Photo-Elicitation Methods: A Tool for Participant Engagement in Research

Photo-elicitation methods use photos or other visual media during interviews to prompt verbal discussions and gather data and knowledge. John Collier first used this method in the mid-1950s during an interview (Glaw et al. 2017; Heider et al. 1988). He found that this method can evoke deep emotions and ideas and reveal various layers of meaning (Epstein et al. 2006; Heider et al. 1988). Migration and its impact on society are complex subjects that are often difficult to address humanely and ethically, especially for those involved in healthcare. The photo-elicitation method can provide nursing students with an opportunity to express their personally mediated racism and help them engage in discussions about racism in the context of their social lives.

The primary objective of the present study is to explore the personally mediated racism held by nursing students toward refugees. By utilizing the photo-elicitation method, this study sought to attain the following three specific aims.

1.3.1 | Aim 1

To create an environment that could facilitate nursing students in freely discussing refugees and racism.

1.3.2 | Aim 2

To document, analyze, and reflect upon the viewpoints, thoughts, and lived experiences of nursing students in relation to refugees residing in Türkiye based on personally mediated racism.

1.3.3 | Aim 3

To uncover the foundational factors that could contribute to the manifestation of personally mediated racism.

2 | Methods

2.1 | Design

In the scope of this study, a qualitative research approach employing the participant-driven photo-elicitation method was undertaken. The principal rationale for using this method is its ability to complement verbal interactions by introducing novel visual elements and symbols that cannot be effectively conveyed through words alone (Epstein et al. 2006). The participants could select the photos they deemed relevant for discussion. Thus, they had control over the information they disclosed. Epstein et al. (2006) used photo-elicitation in interviews as an "ice breaker" activity, fostering a comfortable atmosphere for discussion and as a tool to encourage comments, recollections, and discussions during semi-structured interviews.

2.2 | Setting and Participants

In October 2022, the study was announced to a total of 102 students from the nursing department of a university's health sciences faculty. Two inclusion criteria for this study were that participants be in their third year of study and willing to participate. Selecting third-year students was motivated by the belief that their familiarity with each other would foster an environment where they feel comfortable expressing their opinions during discussions without feeling alienated. To facilitate discussion among participants within the framework of ethical understanding and social events, third-year nursing students who had completed the ethics course were selected as the sampling group for the study. The exclusion criterion was the inability to participate in discussions and the status of being a foreign student. Thirty-five nursing students purposefully were selected for inclusion in the study through purposive sampling.

Given that this study was conducted at a local university in Türkiye, the sample group exhibited significant socioeconomic and geographical diversity. The university attracts students from various backgrounds, originating from both metropolitan areas such as Istanbul and Ankara, as well as more rural cities such as Gaziantep and Igdır. The highly diverse backgrounds of the participants facilitated insightful discussions about different perspectives and provided valuable information. None of the participants had any prior experience with forced migration.

2.3 | Data Collection

2.3.1 | Procedure

Three phases were involved in the process of collecting the data.

2.3.1.1 | Phase 1: Preparedness. Project briefings were conducted for selected students 1 week before the interviews. During this phase, the researcher explained the project and informed all participants about the study.

2.3.1.2 | Phase 2: Photo Activity. Photo-elicitation is a cognitive, process that involves constructing and reconstructing participants' interpretation of their experience through a visual means (Glaw et al. 2017). In this phase, the researcher encouraged participants to identify topics they wished to discuss concerning refugees living in Türkiye. They were then asked to select and bring at least one publicly available photograph that they felt best represented the topics they wanted to address. The photos used in this study were selected from general media sources by nursing students. To maintain the focus on migrants, images with additional details that might prompt the nursing students to discuss sociopolitical issues were excluded. Using this method, the sensitivity to the context of the images was maintained throughout the discussions.

2.3.1.3 | Phase 3: Focus Groups. At this stage, focus groups were initially established, with 35 nursing students being

randomly assigned to each group. There were four focus groups, each comprising 8 or 9 participants. The discussions were conducted in empty and suitable classrooms of the school after regular working hours.

Each focus group discussion consisted of three stages and was facilitated by the author. First, the participants submitted all photos to the researcher to plan the best way to present the images effectively to support the subsequent questions and discussions. In the photo-elicitation method, using different sequences to present photos can contribute to the concept of "breaking the frame," where photos are displayed from various angles and perspectives to encourage more in-depth discussion. The researcher followed this approach while presenting the photos.

Second, to minimize preconceived judgment, participants had the opportunity to see the photos submitted by other participants for the first time during this stage. They were encouraged to take a few minutes to thoroughly examine the photos. To promote a more objective and unbiased discussion, the participants were not allowed to review the photos beforehand. Third, the photos were spread on a desk, and the nursing students were asked to provide their views about each photo. Each focus group autonomously determined which photo to discuss and the sequence in which they would discuss them.

The data were gathered through a semi-structured approach. The author guided and led the discussion by presenting questions formulated using the photo-elicitation interview techniques outlined by Epstein et al. (2006).

- "Why did you choose to discuss this photo?"

- "What emotions do you experience when you see these photos?"

- How do these emotions impact you as a nursing student? Can you share your experiences with us?

- "Could you please elaborate on the underlying reasons behind your discourse?"

In each focus group, eight or nine photos were presented (each participant submitted at least one photo). The interviews were recorded using a small digital recorder, and their durations ranged from 35 to 40 min. All interviews were transcribed and imported into a MAXQDA software package for qualitative analysis of the data.

2.4 | Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was performed to derive meanings from the ideas, discourses, and experiences of the participants by coding and generating themes (Braun and Clarke 2021). This analytical approach was selected because of its emphasis on acknowledging the subjectivity of the researcher. In reflexive thematic analysis, themes are regarded as creative and interpretive narratives (Braun and Clarke 2021). It is not a matter of following procedures "correctly," but rather about developing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the data without necessarily seeking consensus on the meaning (Braun and Clarke 2021). To

enhance nuanced understanding and enrich the data set, two external researchers who are experienced in qualitative methods were involved in the coding phase (Supporting information S1).

Each participant was defined as follows (e.g., participant [P], P3; focus group [Fg], Fg1; photo [Ph], Ph 4).

2.5 | Ethical Considerations

All study procedures were approved by the institutional review board (Cankiri Karatekin University, version number: 29/23112022). The participants willingly took part. Written informed consent was obtained from all of those who agreed to participate in the study.

2.6 | Rigor and Reflexivity

Criteria for trustworthiness were applied to enhance the value of the study. After identifying themes and subthemes, a qualitative expert validated these to improve dependability, reliability, and confirmability.

To minimize potential biases, a self-reflective approach was adopted throughout the study (Olmos-Vega et al. 2023). The researcher, who resides in Türkiye, is cognizant of societal changes and the prevalence of anti-refugee rhetoric but has no direct personal or professional relationship with refugees. At this point, the researcher critically examined their own social, cultural, and academic positioning to ensure that personal perspectives did not unduly influence data collection or analysis. The credibility of the study was further enhanced through the documentation of field notes immediately following each interview.

To strengthen the ethical dimension of the study, two external researchers were involved in the analysis process. Their critical feedback ensured impartiality and added rigor to the interpretation of the findings. This collaborative and reflexive approach, implemented at every stage, helped address potential preconceptions and contributed to a balanced and trustworthy interpretation of the data.

3 | Results

The discussions were conducted with 4 focus groups and a total of 35 nursing students. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. During discussions, 34 photos were used which are selected by the participants. Supporting Information S2 displays some photos used during focus group discussions. The derivation of the two themes and 9 subthemes from the data set is shown in Figure 1.

3.1 | The Road to Personally Mediated Racism

3.1.1 | Limited Resources

Most participants express that there is significant negativity towards refugees, attributing this to Türkiye's limited resources. They emphasize that as a developing country, Türkiye is experiencing

worsening economic conditions, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. They indicate that the presence of refugees exacerbates these economic challenges. Additionally, they suggest that inadequate management of the situation could further deteriorate the economic conditions of the Turkish population. Many participants note that the refugee crisis significantly strains access to resources such as healthcare, employment opportunities, and housing, thereby escalating societal tensions toward refugees.

Yes, it was very difficult for refugees what they went through... but now many things are difficult for us as Turkish as well. We are aware of the limitations we face in terms of healthcare expenditures, economic challenges, and a shortage of job opportunities, as I see our goodwill being abused. These photos make me feel we are not secure and tells me they must leave now.
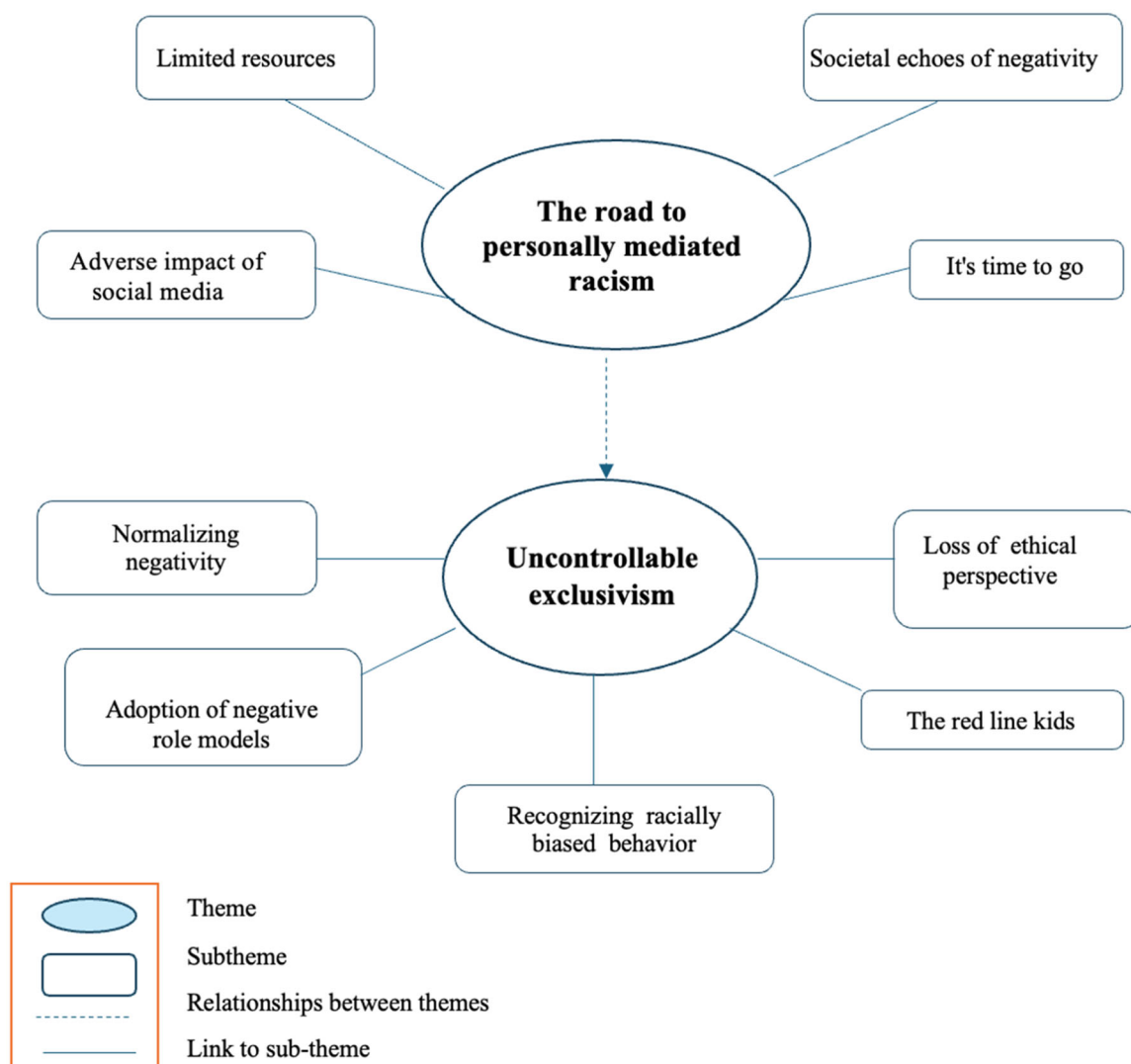
(P5, Fg2, Ph 4,6)

Everything is becoming more challenging in the world. Even though we are currently students, we find ourselves discussing difficult economic conditions. I acknowledge that what others have been through is incredibly tough, but I cannot confidently say that favorable circumstances await us soon. I believe it is time for us to contemplate our own selves and consider our future.

(P4, Fg3, Ph5)

TABLE 1 | Description of the participants' characteristics.

	Focus Group 1 (*n* = 8)	Focus Group 2 (*n* = 9)	Focus Group 3 (*n* = 8)	Focus Group 4 (*n* = 10)
Age (years)				
Mean	21.75	22.4	23.2	22.7
Range	21–23	20–23	21–23	22-24
Grade				
Third year	8	9	8	10
Sex				
Male	3 (37.5)	4 (42.9)	4 (50.0)	3 (30.0)
Female	6 (62.5)	5 (57.1)	4 (50.0)	7 (70.0)

FIGURE 1 | The map of reflexive thematic analysis.

3.1.2 | Societal Echoes of Negativity

The participants highlight the unavoidable reality of sharing mutual concerns with those around them. They report that negative attitudes are widespread within the population and note that these attitudes are becoming increasingly pervasive. According to them, it is impossible to overlook the ongoing situation within their own country.

I cannot ignore the situation in my country. I am acutely aware of the ongoing issues. Many people are concerned about the future, the increasing number of refugees, and the prevailing uncertainties, which contribute to a sense of unease. Everyone I know reacts strongly to this situation.

(P7, Fg3, Ph 1,2)

3.1.3 | Adverse Impact of Social Media

The information shared on social media plays a crucial role in shaping many participants' views and influencing their behaviors. They often reference X and Facebook, platforms that amplify societal anxiety.

The content I come across on social media platforms has a significant impact on me, particularly the conflicts between Syrians and Turks. Honestly, I believe this influences all of us, and we cannot simply ignore what is happening. Türkiye is our homeland, and the issues unfolding there are deeply connected to our own lives and identities.

(P3, Fg4, Ph8)

3.1.4 | It Is Time to Go

All participants agree that it is time for refugees to leave. They argue that the Syrian war has ended and that refugees are no longer under threat.

They should return to their home country. However, I believe that Türkiye offers them a better living environment, as they benefit from nearly all the opportunities available in our country, including priority access to healthcare... This is very frustrating.

(P4, Fg2, Ph 6,7)

3.2 | Uncontrollable Exclusivism

3.2.1 | Normalizing Negativity

During the discussions, a common language emerges that reflects the acceptance of an exclusionary stance. Most nursing students express that they now view negative behavior toward refugees as normal in various social institutions and public places. They strongly emphasize the decrease in tolerance toward refugees in society, report that their own tolerance has diminished, and state that they can no longer empathize.

Observing the negative attitudes prevalent in society can influence us to adopt similar behaviors. When witnessing individuals employed in positions that could be filled by Turkish citizens or when opportunities are extended to them, it may evoke feelings of frustration. During such moments, it seems normal for racist behaviors to manifest.

(P2, Fg3, Ph5)

Sometimes, while watching the news and seeing reports about refugees, even when the content is negative for them, I realize that I no longer feel any sadness. It was not like this at first, but now I find myself unable to empathize with their situation.

(P5, Fg3, Ph8)

3.2.2 | Adoption of Negative Role Models

Nursing students express that they observe role models displaying racism in professional settings, which triggers the negative feelings they already have toward refugees.

I occasionally encounter negative role models who exhibit racist behaviors, and at times, I find myself sharing their perspective. However, I consciously remind myself to align with a more positive stance that rejects racism.

(P9, Fg4, Ph2)

3.2.3 | The Red Line Kids

While acknowledging the existence of a normalized exclusionary attitude in some healthcare settings, they simultaneously emphasize the special status of children. All the nursing students reject any negative approach or mistreatment toward refugee children.

I acknowledge that we are future health care professionals, but above all, we are all human beings. When confronted with things that pose a threat to us, it can be challenging to view them objectively from an ethical perspective. However, from my perspective, children hold a special place, as they are innocent and deserve our utmost care and protection.

(P2, Fg3, Ph3, 6)

3.2.4 | Loss of Ethical Perspective

Most participants emphasized the importance of ethics in the nursing profession. Despite this, their concerns make it difficult for them to view refugee issues from an ethical perspective.

They have been here for an extended period, during which we have witnessed numerous incidents. Despite having limited resources, they have 6 or 7 children, which I consider irresponsible behavior. Particularly in social environments, my actions and demeanor have become

unfavorable, even against my own will, and I feel as though I am losing sight of my professional identity.

(P6, Fg2, Ph4)

3.2.5 | Recognizing Racially Biased Behavior

Many participants do not initially view the behaviors or attitudes they exhibit as "racism." However, as discussions progress, they begin to recognize their discourses and behaviors as forms of racism.

I did not previously consider myself to have racist thoughts or identify as a racist. However, since the onset of the Syrian war and the events we have witnessed in our country, I have noticed that these negative feelings have influenced my behavior. Controlling these reactions has become increasingly difficult. For instance, the other day, I had to visit the hospital, and when I saw refugees, I felt myself reacting through my gaze and words.

(P3, Fg4, Ph 2, 6)

4 | Discussion

Race inadequately represents genetic ancestry, as modern science has proven that race is a social construct lacking biological grounding (Bonilla-Silva 1997). To eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in every setting, including health care, understanding what drives racism in a society is important. Personally mediated racism, including personal biases and discriminatory actions, significantly contributes to sustaining these inequalities (Jones 2000). Given its capacity to shape behavior, emotions, cognition, and decision-making, it is crucial to acknowledge and address such attitudes and behaviors at both the individual and systemic levels to promote a fairer society. Understanding the underlying origins of these prejudices and negative discourses is paramount, surpassing the mere assessment of individuals' negative sentiments (Omi and Winant 2018).

This study, as the first to employ the photo-elicitation method to explore personally mediated racism among nursing students, offers valuable insights into complex and sensitive issues. The findings suggest that this approach effectively created a comfortable environment for nursing students to discuss difficult issues, offering an alternative tool for nurse educators.

4.1 | The Road to Personally Mediated Racism

The discussion-driven photo-elicitation method yields valuable insights into the underlying factors contributing to personally mediated racism among nursing students. The results indicate that the underlying reasons may vary depending on the specific circumstances of each country. To address "racism" effectively within their national context, nursing faculty and educators must critically examine the issue. Nursing students have expressed that limited resources threaten prospects. All

participants are concerned about the future of Türkiye and, consequently, their own futures. This indicates that the increasingly tangible adverse effects felt in society now extend to impact nursing students, intensifying their negative rhetoric against immigrants. Although Türkiye has experienced various mass migrations in the past, the recent influx of refugees, particularly Syrians, presents a unique challenge due to its scale and nature (Makovsky 2019). As a result, strong discriminatory discourses, especially against Syrian refugees, are prevalent in discussions, reflecting anger towards the management of the migration process in Türkiye. Most nursing students consistently express that it is time for refugees to leave. Given the average age of the participants in this study, the findings suggest that the younger generation, who are experiencing the negative impacts of migration, such as social and security threats and worsening economic conditions, are more likely to develop personally mediated racism. Gençler (2020) suggests that similar findings were reported by Barutçu and Zengin, who found in their 2018 study that, while most nursing students did not express personal issues with refugees, nearly all felt that refugees should return to their home countries once the conflicts there are resolved. The uncertainty surrounding the deployment and duration of refugees' stay in Türkiye has led to new problems due to the country's limited resources (Gençler 2020).

The economic concerns emphasized by all nursing students are the underlying reasons for their prejudices and discriminatory attitudes toward refugees. The severe economic challenges that Türkiye is facing have heightened economic inequalities among the population. Consequently, this situation negatively influences society's overall attitude toward refugees (ORSAM 2015). A study supports this finding by showing that in European countries, racist views are more prevalent in those with greater economic inequality than in those with greater economic equality (Caller and Gorodzeisky 2022). Economic challenges, as a result of limited resources, are significant contributors to societal hostility towards refugees (Gençler 2020), and this issue similarly impacts nursing students in this study. Social tendencies can drive negative attitudes among nursing students toward refugees (Barutcu and Zengin 2018; Karadas et al. 2023) as individuals continuously interact with their environment, which includes physical, ecological, sociopolitical, and cultural dimensions. This finding is expected, as the social context influences all individuals (Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas 2021), including nursing students. Studies from several European countries support this result, showing that nursing students hold negative views toward the social rights granted to refugees (Sánchez-Ojeda et al. 2020) and that negative attitudes have increased because refugees receive more social welfare assistance than natives (Ugarte Gurrutxaga et al. 2020).

Social media platforms, which allow the spread of racist expressions and images (Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas 2021), contribute to the formation of prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes among nursing students. Specific social media platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Facebook, act as triggers for existing anger and frustration toward refugees. Provocations involving refugee groups can happen anywhere in Türkiye, (ORSAM 2015). But their frequency has increased recently. The findings highlight that the effects of

social media tools should not be ignored. It is well-known that social media tools are widespread globally and have a significant influence on populations. Supporting studies have indicated that social media platforms pose a threat by normalizing the gendered and place-based racialization of refugees in Türkiye (Aldamen 2023; Ozduzen et al. 2021).

4.2 | Uncontrollable Exclusivism

Based on the results, the study reveals that many nursing students display personally mediated racist behaviors, including discriminatory actions, prevalent prejudices, and negative discourses directed toward refugees. Some of these students claim that their attitudes and behaviors are not deliberate, although they find it challenging to manage them. This observation aligns with Jones (2000), who notes that personally mediated racism can be either intentional or unintentional. Additionally, some nursing students acknowledge their discriminatory stance, recognizing that the concerns they previously mentioned influenced their attitudes. The discussions represent the initial platform where nursing students explicitly articulated and acknowledged their stance. Louie-Poon et al. (2022) argue that without uncovering covert mechanisms hosting racism, efforts to develop solutions for dismantling racism will be ineffective. Some nursing students frequently overlook ethical values in discussions about refugees, perceiving such attitudes as normal. Certain participants admit to their discriminatory behaviors and find it challenging to view refugees—aside from children—from a humane perspective. Notably, global and societal shifts may negatively influence the ethical perspectives of healthcare professionals and students over time (Hakimi et al. 2020). A study conducted with nursing students in Türkiye indicates a decline in their moral sensitivity (Kılıç Akca et al. 2017). Racism constitutes a violation of ethical practice among healthcare professionals who are devoted to ensuring the provision of equitable care to patients, a crucial element of social solidarity (Hamed et al. 2020; Weitzel et al. 2020). In response, Louie-Poon et al. (2022) highlight the necessity of embedding a moral commitment to antiracism within the nursing discipline.

Personally mediated racism may maintain structural barriers, which have the potential to turn into institutionalized racism (Jones 2000). The findings of this study revealed that most nursing students have hesitation in offering healthcare services to refugees, excluding children, due to their negative sentiments toward this group. This finding is concerning because all participants were in their third year of education, and most would likely have graduated within 1 year and entered professional life. Similarly, Sánchez-Ojeda et al. (2020) reported that final-year nursing students had more negative attitudes than first-year students. This significant finding underscores the necessity of incorporating an antiracist approach into nursing curricula.

Nursing students' observations of racist behaviors by some nurses in clinical settings have further reinforced the normalization of their own negative attitudes. The presence of adverse role models within healthcare institutions can negatively impact nursing students (Mohamed Shaburdin et al. 2022; Odzakovic et al. 2023). Research indicates that

healthcare professionals often harbor prejudices, frequently without full awareness of their own biases, which can have detrimental effects on refugees (Arrieta et al. 2018; Fitzgerald and Hurst 2017; Maina et al. 2018). Kechi et al. (2024) suggest that to mitigate negative stereotypes, implicit bias assessment and training should be implemented for faculty, staff, and students.

Similarly, some studies indicate that nursing students perceive refugees and their relatives admitted to hospitals as lacking respect for healthcare workers and hospital rules, which leads to communication problems (Tosun and Sinan 2020). Additionally, nursing students have struggled to manage emotions such as anger and guilt while providing intercultural care in immigrant health centers during initial encounters (Türk et al. 2024). These findings underscore that both perceptions of disrespect and emotional challenges contribute to difficulties in delivering effective and empathetic care to refugees.

4.3 | Implications for the Nursing Profession

This study has implications for education, practice, and policy. In terms of education, the findings suggest that knowledge-based curricula alone are no longer sufficient to foster positive attitudes toward refugees. Despite having strong intercultural competence, nursing students can still exhibit highly negative attitudes toward immigrants (Türkan Işik and Can Özdemir 2024). It is crucial to recognize that personally mediated racism is deeply intertwined with individuals' personal histories as well as existing institutional and social structures. These structures not only shape individual behavior but also influence how personal prejudices and race-based interactions manifest (Banaji et al. 2021). The integration of individual biases with institutional and social systems perpetuates systemic racism (Jones 2000). Therefore, in addition to educational efforts, faculty and educators must remain aware of their roles and behaviors, recognizing their capacity to challenge these dynamics. Neglecting their influence risks reinforcing the very systems of inequality they strive to dismantle.

Nursing students need to be aware of their personally mediated racism and the underlying reasons, but traditional education methods may offer limited opportunities to achieve this goal (Hultsjö et al. 2019). Recognizing the curriculum as a dynamic, evolving framework is essential for embedding a commitment to antiracism in nursing education (Boakye et al. 2024). Incorporating antiracism into national discussions on nursing curriculum requirements is essential to upholding our professional commitment to equity (Boakye et al. 2024). This need becomes even more pressing considering the societal changes occurring in countries like Türkiye, highlighting the significance of a strong commitment to antiracist pedagogy. The principles of social justice and global social responsibility can play crucial roles in the formulation of antiracist curricula. (Eysenbach and Bewick 2011; Fatahi et al. 2023; Shahzad et al. 2022).

Integrating antiracist pedagogy into the nursing curriculum requires a strong focus on educator preparation. Nurse educators feel insufficiently prepared to effectively support antiracist

education (Beard 2016). To address this, essential strategies may include fostering self-awareness and reflection on privilege and biases, recognizing the various ways racism influences educational spaces, and actively engaging in antiracist training, workshops, and seminars to build their knowledge and skills (Muray et al. 2023). This study highlights methods like the photo-elicitation method, which can empower educators to encourage students to address challenging topics.

When addressing personally mediated racist approaches, another key issue is the potential for nurse educators to hold racist perspectives. To tackle this, it is crucial to embrace and appreciate diverse ways of knowing among educators. For example, positivism, which has historically dominated research, operates on the assumption of a singular truth and controllable contexts. To challenge such limitations, educators should explore alternative epistemological and ontological paradigms (Gottlieb and Gottlieb 2017). Doing so enables them to better understand societal dynamics, identify their own biases, and position themselves in nursing education to meet the evolving needs of society effectively.

In terms of policy, societal change impacts not only specific groups within a country but also all layers of its systems, including future health professionals and healthcare. Policymakers must carefully consider every aspect when making decisions about refugees. Nursing schools in countries that face challenges such as hosting refugees and addressing social and economic issues should prioritize strategies that aim to transform both students and society in a positive way. The protection and promotion of human rights in healthcare are fundamental responsibilities of nurses. Nursing organizations should collaborate to strengthen core values and advance health equity within a dynamically evolving societal context.

In practice, cultural and implicit bias assessment and training for faculty, staff, and students are crucial. The harmful effects of social media serve as a significant catalyst for the adoption of racist attitudes, particularly due to the growing prevalence of negative content targeting refugees worldwide (Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas 2021), including in Türkiye (Ökten Sipahioğlu 2023). Making antiracist pedagogical training a part of new faculty members mentorship and integration experience. This will require commitment on the part of schools of nursing, nursing organizations, and educational institutions to inform and support these training opportunities. Engaging in discussions and exchanging ideas about social media content can help mitigate these negative effects and promote more accurate interpretations of the information presented (Madigan et al. 2023). Such exchanges enable students to critically analyze and contextualize information, thereby equipping them with the skills necessary to navigate the complex landscape of social media effectively.

4.4 | Limitations and Strengths

The current study was conducted by a single researcher. To address this limitation, the researcher sought assistance from two external researchers during the data analysis phase. Their support was aimed at enhancing the coding process. The researcher was also a lecturer at the same school where the study took place. This dual role can be seen as both a limitation and a strength of the study. The trust of participants in the researcher has facilitated open discussions on sensitive topics such as racism. The study was conducted toward the end of the semester to minimize the influence of anxiety concerning grades on the results. This approach allowed the nursing students to freely express their thoughts without the pressure of academic evaluations.

Compared with traditional interview techniques that rely only on verbal communication, the use of photos was better at stimulating conversations between the participants and the researcher. The inclusion of visual materials facilitated a richer and more nuanced exchange of ideas, which allowed the researcher to better understand the thoughts and experiences of the participants. The study demonstrated that the focus group method can help nursing students feel more comfortable discussing sensitive and challenging topics. Students highlighted that this approach encouraged diverse perspectives and facilitated a collaborative and supportive discussion environment. The incorporation of discussions involving photos and alignment with nursing students' discourses fostered a sense of comfort, encouraging them to freely express their feelings and experiences.

4.5 | Recommendations for Future Studies

Nursing students, as part of an evolving societal landscape, demonstrate sensitivity to ongoing events and the impact of negativity. Despite the challenges of discussing racism, they show a willingness to engage with and deliberate on the issue. This openness provides researchers with an opportunity to expose racism within nursing education and care, increasing its visibility and enabling more effective interventions.

This study highlights the photo-elicitation method as an effective tool for creating safe spaces where nursing students can reflect on their attitudes toward refugees, identify implicit biases, and critically analyze the societal dynamics shaping these perceptions. Future research can apply this method to address personally mediated racism by integrating it into antiracist education programs. Using contrasting images of refugees in various contexts (e.g., families, professionals, or vulnerable situations) can challenge stereotypes, humanize refugees, and emphasize nursing students' roles in delivering equitable care.

Furthermore, photo-elicitation fosters emotional engagement by presenting powerful images, such as refugees accessing healthcare or overcoming barriers, making abstract issues more tangible. It can also serve as both an intervention and evaluation tool, helping to monitor attitudinal changes. Pre- and post-intervention sessions where students interact with photos and share their perceptions can assess shifts in language, emotional responses, and insights, thus evaluating the effectiveness of antiracist education programs.

This study focused solely on students; however, future research involving consultation with or co-designing with refugees and migrants to address othering may provide valuable contributions.

5 | Conclusion

The current study underscores the need to address personally mediated racism because of its considerable impact on future nursing care. The findings indicate that nursing students exhibit personally mediated racism while also uncovering its root causes. To prevent this, it is crucial to adopt a structured approach to addressing racism.

The significance of nurse educators in eliminating racism cannot be overstated. Hence, they must primarily recognize and confront racism in society, and they must take the lead in initiating conversations about racism in nursing education. As mentioned before, nurse educators should incorporate key concepts into their antiracist educational programs and develop proactive strategies to overcome racism within the realms of nursing education and healthcare (Mihaly et al. 2023).

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.