



| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi |

The Relationship Between Mindfulness and Psychological Wellbeing of School Counselors: Mediating Effect of Work-related Psychological Flexibility*

Okul Psikolojik Danışmanlarının Bilinçli Farkındalık ve Psikolojik İyi Oluşları Arasındaki İlişki: İş-Yaşamı Psikolojik Esnekliğin Aracılık Etkisi

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Keywords

- 1.work-related psychological flexibility
- 2.school counselor
3. psychological wellbeing
4. mindfulness

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Abstract

This research focused on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which is one of the third wave Cognitive Behavioral approaches, and its core concept of psychological flexibility specific to the work environment of school counselors. In this regard, this study's purpose was first to analyze the relationship between school counselors' mindfulness and psychological wellbeing, second the mediating effect of work-related psychological flexibility in the relationship between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing. With this purpose in mind, The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS), and Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ) were used. The sample of the study consisted of 279 (72.5%) female and 106 (27.5%) male (N= 385) school counselors from diverse cities in Turkey. As a result of regression and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, mindfulness significantly predicted school counselors' psychological wellbeing, and work-related psychological flexibility partially mediated the relationship between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing. The findings were discussed in light of the literature, and the implications were presented for increasing school counselors' psychological wellbeing based on mindfulness and psychological flexibility research and applications.

Öz

Bu çalışmada 3. dalga Bilişsel Davranışçı yaklaşımlardan birisi olan Kabul ve Kararlılık Terapisi (KKT) ve onun temel kavramı psikolojik esnekliğe okul psikolojik danışmanlarının çalışma ortamları özelinde odaklanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda bu araştırmanın amacı öncelikle okul psikolojik danışmanlarının (OPD) bilinçli farkındalık düzeyleri ile psikolojik iyi oluş düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek ve sonrasında ise bu ilişkide iş yaşamı psikolojik esnekliğinin aracılık etkisini analiz etmektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, Bilinçli Farkındalık Ölçeği (BİFÖ), Psikolojik İyi Oluş Ölçeği (PİÖ) ve İş Yaşamı Psikolojik Esneklik Ölçekleri (İYPE) kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini Türkiye'nin farklı şehirlerinden 279 (72.5%) kadın ve 106 (27.5%) erkek olmak üzere toplam 385 okul psikolojik danışmanından oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada yapılan regresyon ve Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi (YEM) sonuçlarına göre, bilinçli farkındalığın okul psikolojik danışmanlarının psikolojik iyi oluşlarını anlamlı bir şekilde yordadığı ve iş yaşamı psikolojik esnekliğinin ise bilinçli farkındalık ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasında kısmi bir aracılık etkisine sahip olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. OPD'lerin psikolojik iyi oluş düzeylerini arttıracak bilinçli farkındalık ve psikolojik esneklik temelli araştırma ve uygulamalar önerilerde sunulmuş ve bulgular alanyazın ışığında tartışılmıştır.

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INTRODUCTION

Counseling is defined as a helping profession that strengthens individuals, families, and groups and helps them to fulfill their mental health, wellbeing, education, and career goals (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2010). School counseling, more specifically, is a helping profession that focuses on students' relationships and interactions with each other and with all kinds of environmental factors in the school environment and is offered to remove the barriers that reduce their school success (The Education Trust, 2009). The place of school counselors (SC) in society and the perception of them have also changed and developed in Turkey, as in the whole world, over time. Indeed, the concept of counseling and guidance started to be included in the Turkish National Education system in the 1950s, and SCs began to be employed in secondary education institutions in the 1973-1974 academic year (Doğan, 1996; Yeşilyaprak, 2009). Counseling and guidance were mostly addressed for the solution of educational and personal problems in the 1950s; however, orientation service further came to the forefront in the later years. It is known that teachers mostly performed the orientation function before it came to the forefront.

In Turkey, with a tradition of school counseling for approximately 45 years, it is observed that there are still serious misconceptions about the duties and responsibilities of counselors working at different levels in schools and problems associated with them (Karataş & Kaya, 2015). Based on the American School Counselors Association (ASCA), Cervoni and DeLucia-Waack (2011) indicated the duties and responsibilities of SCs as creating a safe, healthy and human rights-respectful learning environment for all individuals in the school. The fact that SCs are also expected to be active in duties such as administrative duties and non-guidance activities causes them to have confusion of duty and identity (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). The key roles of counselors are very important for the functioning of the school. When the roles of SCs in schools are examined, it is observed that they have an important role for the mental health of children and adolescents (Collins, 2014) and have roles such as working with misbehavior, conflict resolution, providing information, and providing consultancy services (Atıcı & Çekici, 2012).

Relationship between the Difficulties Experienced by SCs and their Psychological Well-Being Levels

Considering the changing individual and social structure, although there have been important changes in the counseling profession as in the process of change, which is inevitable in many professions, it was revealed that SCs did not perceive a change in their roles in the school and considered that there was an increase in consultancy services, and that the studies with which they were mostly satisfied were counseling practices (Nazlı, 2007). In the feedback regarding the roles of SCs in schools received from school administrations, it was indicated that the number of counselors was insufficient, that the services in this field should be provided by counseling and guidance graduates, and that SCs made significant contributions to the school climate (Karataş & Kaya, 2015). It was emphasized that there should be a guidance service in schools due to the nature of counseling and guidance services, and thus, SCs could better observe students' interests and abilities (Özabacı et al., 2008).

The use of different titles in different public institutions (Kuzgun, 1990), and the occurrence of uncertainties due to very different expectations, duties and responsibilities from them in the school environment can be listed among the main problems of SCs from the past to the present in Turkey. Due to these problems, the process of the school counseling profession is compared to the adolescence period (Tuzgöl-Dost & Keklik, 2012). In addition to this this identity confusion, some other problems faced by counselors in schools in Turkey can be listed as the presence of expectations that are not compatible with the education they received during their undergraduate education at the university (Eren-Gümüş, 2018) and the small number of counselors compared to the number of students (Karataş & Kaya, 2015).

The role conflict experienced by counselors in schools and the uncertainty of responsibilities may cause them to have cognitive, emotional, and physiological difficulties. These difficulties may also increase their burn-out level. The burn-out levels of counselors working in schools were examined in terms of their relationship with emotional intelligence (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016), the institution worked, experience, and the perception of self-efficacy (İkiz, 2010). Bardhoshi et al. (2014) emphasized that one of the important factors that increased the burn-out level of SCs was that they performed tasks other than guidance and counseling. Psychological wellbeing levels may decrease when burn-out levels increase, which may also be considered as a risk factor for SCs (Bardhoshi et al, 2014; İkiz et al., 2010; Kumcağız et al., 2017; Seçer, 2015). In up-to-date studies, psychological wellbeing, which includes positive and negative emotions in life and also includes life satisfaction and psychological functionality of the individual (Ryff, 1989), has been found to be positively associated with the presence of preventive programs in schools (Blow, 2020) and the self-care levels of SCs (Aibing & Xinying, 2020).

When all these problems experienced by SCs from past to present are considered, there are various factors affecting their psychological wellbeing. Counselors' self-compassion (Hall et al., 2013; Iskender, 2009), life satisfaction (Kermen et al., 2016), psychological resilience levels (Karacaoğlu & Köktaş, 2016) can be considered among them. The mindfulness levels of SCs can also be considered among the factors that affect their psychological wellbeing (Deniz et al., 2017).

Mindfulness Levels of SCs

The most common definition of mindfulness is the state of being conscious and being aware of the events that occur during the time period lived in (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Although mindfulness is a way of directing attention that takes its origin from

the eastern meditation tradition, it has increasingly started to be discussed and applied in the western culture in recent years (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). It is usually defined as focusing one's attention on events that are happening now without judgment and in an acquiescent manner (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Linehan, 1993). Considering the difficulties experienced by SCs in different areas in the school environment, mindfulness is considered to be an important variable affecting their psychological wellbeing. In this context, in a study conducted by Flook et al. (2013), it was revealed that there was a decrease in the burn-out levels of teachers who had mindfulness education and applied what they learned. In another study, Jennings et al. (2013) revealed that the performance of teachers who learned and practice mindfulness increased in their workplaces.

In this context, considering the cases where SCs who perceive the school working environment and climate negatively have increased anxiety levels (Ekşi, 2006) and increased occupational burn-out (Yıldız, 2012), the fact that they realize their physical and mental experiences in the moment they are can be considered an important skill. Mindfulness of SCs may also be the factors that increase their psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction. Indeed, Greason and Cashwell (2009) conducted a quantitative study with 179 graduate students in the field of counseling, and they revealed that the level of mindfulness positively and significantly predicted the self-efficacy, empathy, and attention levels of counselors.

In a current study investigating the role of mindfulness-based education in individuals' work lives, Johnson et al. (2020) revealed that mindfulness was effectively used in people's work lives based on individuals, groups, and organizations. Furthermore, in a study conducted with SCs working in public schools in Australia, a highly negative relationship was found between mindfulness and burn-out. It was indicated that mindfulness activities to be performed for counselors may reduce their burn-out (Earle, 2017). In a study conducted in Australia, it was concluded that burn-out decreased and mindfulness increased as the working year increased (Rodd, 2017). Finally, when the studies in which mindfulness was associated with psychological wellbeing in different samples were examined, it was observed that individuals with high mindfulness skills also had a higher level of psychological wellbeing (Deniz et al., 2017; Hanley et al., 2014; Öcel, 2017; Whitehead et al., 2018; Zümbül, 2019).

Psychological Flexibility and Work-Related Psychological Flexibility

It is essential to first address work-related psychological flexibility by explaining the concept of psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility is the central concept of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), one of the third wave Cognitive Behavioral approaches. The primary purpose of ACT is to increase psychological flexibility in individuals (Hayes et al., 1999). Hayes et al. (2012) defined psychological flexibility as the ability or skill to take steps in line with their values by consciously focusing on present moment. While human behaviors are explained in the ACT approach, the context in which the behavior takes place, function, and form are carefully examined and analyzed (Hayes et al., 2012). ACT is based on the Relational Frame Theory (Hayes et al., 2001) and explains all psychological problems experienced by individuals with the relationship between language and cognition (Hayes et al., 2012). The absence of psychological flexibility is defined as psychological inflexibility according to the ACT model, and psychological inflexibility is closely associated with dysfunctional behaviors and psychopathology (Bond et al., 2011; Hayes et al., 2012). In the ACT approach, psychological flexibility is comprehensively explained on six main interrelated processes. These are awareness of the present moment, values, committed actions in the service of values, contextual self, cognitive defusion and finally the acceptance (Hayes et al., 2012).

When it is considered that psychological flexibility is addressed according to the context in which the behavior takes place, the variables such as individuals' performance in work life, attitudes and approaches to work, and the time of work continuity are related to psychological flexibility levels in work life (Bond et al., 2013). Being aware of the values is one of the important elements of psychological flexibility. In this context, for instance, if SCs have a value such as working as an efficient or effective counselor in the workplace, they will make an effort to improve themselves in line with this value and their performance in school will increase in this direction. On the other hand, those who want to take committed actions to become efficient or effective SCs may have difficulty in taking steps due to various reasons such as anxiety, fear, lack of self-confidence, which requires SCs to be aware of the emotions, thoughts and physiological reactions of the moment they are in, clearly and without judgment (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Studies revealed that a high level of psychological flexibility positively affected the job performance and mental health and increased the capacity of individuals to acquire new skills in the workplace (Bond & Bunce, 2003; Bond & Flaxman, 2006; Hayes et al., 2004). Moreover, it was revealed that psychological flexibility at work decreases work-related stress and emotional burn-out (Bond & Donaldso-Feilder, 2004). Finally, in a study examining the regulatory effects of psychological flexibility and mindfulness on the physical and psychological health levels of healthcare workers, it was revealed that a psychologically flexible and mindful attitude would provide a more effective work in a challenging work environment (Ramaci et al., 2019).

Mediating Role of Work-related Psychological Flexibility

The variable that reveals the relationship between dependent and independent variables and explains why and how this relationship exists is called mediating variable (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). In this context, the significant relationship between mindfulness, which is the independent variable in this study, and psychological wellbeing, which is the dependent variable, was revealed in many different studies. For instance, Howell et al. (2008) revealed that mindfulness positively and significantly explained the emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Moreover, Brown and Ryan (2003) indicated that mindfulness increased self-awareness and thus wellbeing in individuals. Although work-related psychological flexibility, the

mediating effect of which between the independent and dependent variables was investigated in this study, has not been studied much yet as a new concept, there are studies in which the mediating effect of psychological flexibility variable was investigated. Studies show that psychological flexibility is positively correlated with psychological wellbeing (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010; Masuda & Tully, 2011) and negatively correlated with depression (Bond & Bunce, 2000), anxiety (Kashdan et al., 2006) and general psychological distress (Bond & Bunce, 2003). In the literature, there are studies examining the mediating role of psychological flexibility in relation to mindfulness. In this context, Ruiz (2014) revealed that psychological flexibility had a full mediating effect on the relationship between mindfulness and pathological anxiety. Furthermore, in their study conducted with university students, Aydın and Aydın (2020) revealed that mindfulness positively and significantly predicted psychological flexibility, and that the values also had a mediating effect in this relationship. It was also revealed that psychological flexibility was associated with high life satisfaction, emotional and psychological wellbeing, and higher functional psychological adaptation (Bond & Bunce, 2003; Hayes et al., 2006).

Although it was revealed that mindfulness was a highly effective variable in explaining the wellbeing levels of individuals, the fact that these studies were mostly conducted with university students shows that the relationship between individuals' mindfulness levels and wellbeing levels in the work environment has not been studied much yet. Moreover, considering the ACT approach emphasizing that a behavior or skill makes sense in a particular context (Hayes et al., 2012), the main hypothesis appears as "the mindfulness levels of SCs can explain their psychological wellbeing levels through their psychological flexibility levels in their workplaces/schools".

In conclusion, when the literature is reviewed, the variables such as burn-out levels (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Yıldız, 2012) and perceptions of self-efficacy (Ikiz, 2010) were studied in the studies conducted with the SCs. It is considered important to study the psychological wellbeing levels of SCs from the perspective of psychological flexibility that constitutes the basis of ACT, which is a third wave cognitive-behavioral approach. This study emphasizes the importance of the perspective of psychological flexibility in understanding and explaining the problems experienced by SCs. In this context, this study's purpose was to analyze the mediating effect of work-related psychological flexibility in the relationship between psychological wellbeing levels and mindfulness levels of SCs. The research questions that emerged in line with this purpose are as follows:

1. Does mindfulness significantly predict psychological wellbeing of school counselors?
2. Does work-related psychological flexibility level of SCs have a mediation effect in the relationship between their mindfulness and psychological wellbeing levels?

METHOD/MATERIALS

Study group

385 SCs working at different levels of private and public schools constituted the participants of the study. Accordingly, the participants consisted of 279 (72.5%) females and 106 (27.5%) males. The age range of the participants is between 22 and 56 and the mean age was $M= 30.21$ ($SD= 6.67$). Accordingly, while 115 (29.9%) participants worked in kindergartens and primary schools, 137 (35.6%) participants worked in secondary schools, and 133 (34.5%) participants worked in high schools. Within the scope of this study, the data were obtained by the convenience sampling method through online questionnaires sent over the internet from SCs living in different cities of Turkey.

Measurement Tools

Demographic Information Form

Regarding the demographic information of the participants, questions were asked about gender, marital status, education level (undergraduate, graduate and doctorate), working year, department graduated, and institution level (kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, high school).

Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS)

The Psychological Well-Being Scale developed by Diener et al. (2009) is a scale consisting of eight items and a single factor. The scale is scored in 7-point Likert type (1: Strongly disagree and 7: Strongly agree). One of the sample items in the scale is "I live a purposeful and meaningful life". The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .87. The Turkish validity and reliability study of the PWBS was performed by Telef (2013). The single-factor structure of the scale was also provided in the Turkish form. According to the result of Exploratory Factor Analysis performed in the Turkish validity and reliability study, it was revealed that 42% of the total variance was explained. Furthermore, the factor loadings of the scale items were calculated between .54 and .76. Moreover, in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis study, fit indices of the scale were found as $RMSEA= 0.08$, $SRMR=0.04$, $GFI= 0.96$, $NFI= 0.94$, $RFI= 0.92$, $CFI= 0.95$ and $IFI=0.95$. In the Turkish form of the scale, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .80. In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .91.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)

The scale, the original name of which is the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan

(2003), consists of 15 items and a single factor. The scale is scored in 6-point Likert type (1: Almost always, 6: Almost never). High scores from the scale indicate that the individual has a high level of mindfulness. One of the sample items in the scale is "I do the things or tasks automatically without realizing what I am doing". The Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale was performed by Özyeşil et al. (2011), and its single factor structure was confirmed. According to the result of the Exploratory Factor Analysis performed in the adaptation of the scale to Turkish, the single factor structure of MAAS was revealed as it was in the original, and the total variance explained was found to be 58.019%. Furthermore, in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis study, fit indices of the scale were found as $\chi^2/df=2.086$; $RMSEA=.06$; $GFI=.93$; $AGFI=.91$. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of MAAS was found to be .80. For this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the MAAS was calculated as .86.

Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ)

The Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire was developed by Bond et al. (2013) to measure the psychological flexibility levels of individuals in the workplaces. The scale, which is scored in 7-point Likert type (between 1: Not true at all and 7: Always true), consists of seven items and a single factor. High scores from the scale indicate that the individual has a high level of work-related psychological flexibility. One of the sample items in the scale is "Despite my personal concerns, I can work effectively". The Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale was conducted by Aydin et al. (2020), and the single factor structure was revealed according to the results of principal components analysis and the scree plot. Furthermore, the total variance explained by the single factor structure was found to be 51.86%. Moreover, according to the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, it was revealed that the single factor structure of the scale was confirmed and that the model fitted perfectly. The fit indices obtained in this context were $\chi^2/df=1.23$; $RMSEA=.036$; $GFI=.98$; $CFI=.99$; $NFI=.97$. The internal consistency coefficient of the Work-related Acceptance and Action Form was found to be .84. For this research, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the WAAQ was calculated as .93.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

The data were obtained online via the internet to reach SCs working in different cities of Turkey and at different levels of private and public schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. It took approximately 10 minutes for all scales to be answered. The data were obtained from the relevant participants during the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

The data were analyzed using SPSS 20 and AMOS 21 package programs. The relationships between the variables of the study were analyzed using the Pearson moment correlation coefficient, and descriptive values such as mean and standard deviation were also calculated. On the other hand, as it was indicated by MacKinnon et al. (2002), the mediating effect, which is one of the most powerful methods to reveal direct and indirect effects between the variables, was analyzed in the relationship between work-related psychological flexibility and mindfulness levels and psychological wellbeing of SCs. Baron and Kenny (1986) defined three conditions to test the mediating effect in a model. The first of them was that the independent variable (mindfulness) predicted the mediating variable (work-related psychological flexibility). Second, the independent variable predicted the dependent variable (psychological wellbeing). Third, in the model in which the effect of the mediating variable on the dependent variable with the independent variable was examined, if the effect of the independent variable disappeared or decreased, then it was possible to talk about the mediating effect.

FINDINGS

Within the scope of the study, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) (Table 1) were first analyzed. In this context, the mean value was 64.49 ($SS=11.25$) for mindfulness, 44.01 ($SS=7.94$) for psychological wellbeing, and 34.81 ($SS=7.80$) for work-related psychological flexibility. In addition to descriptive statistics, the correlation coefficients (r) between mindfulness, psychological wellbeing, and work-related psychological flexibility are presented in Table 1. Accordingly, there was a positive correlation between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing ($r=.35$), a positive correlation between mindfulness and work-related psychological flexibility ($r=.31$), and again a positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and work-related psychological flexibility ($r=.35$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Mean	Sd	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
1. Mindfulness	64.49	11.25	15	90	-.23	-.36	-	.35**	.31**
2. Psychological Well-being	44.01	7.94	8	56	-.43	-.33	-	-	.35**
3. Work-Related Psychological Flexibility	34.81	7.80	7	49	-.92	.12	-	-	-

In this study, the mediating effect of work-related psychological flexibility between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing was investigated using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). In this context, the necessary assumptions were first tested to perform

SEM analysis. The first of them was the analysis of missing data. In the analysis of missing data, the measurements (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) ($n = 14$) with more than 5% missing data were excluded from the analysis. The final version of the sample, 385 ($M = 30.21$) and ($SD = 6.67$) participants were reached by subtracting the six extreme values obtained as a result of the extreme value analysis Mahalanobis distance. Furthermore, as suggested by Kline (2011), the mean value was assigned for the measurements with missing data below 5%, and there was no missing data in the data set. Moreover, whether the data were normally distributed was tested by analyzing the skewness and kurtosis values of the scales, and it was found out that the values were between -1.5 and 1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), which were in the acceptable range (Table 1). Another assumption before the SEM analysis, multicollinearity analysis requires the absence of a high correlation between independent variables. This study also found out that the multicollinearity assumption was met since the correlation coefficient between mindfulness and work-related psychological flexibility was $r = .35$, ($p < .001$), and the variance inflation factor was $VIF < 10$.

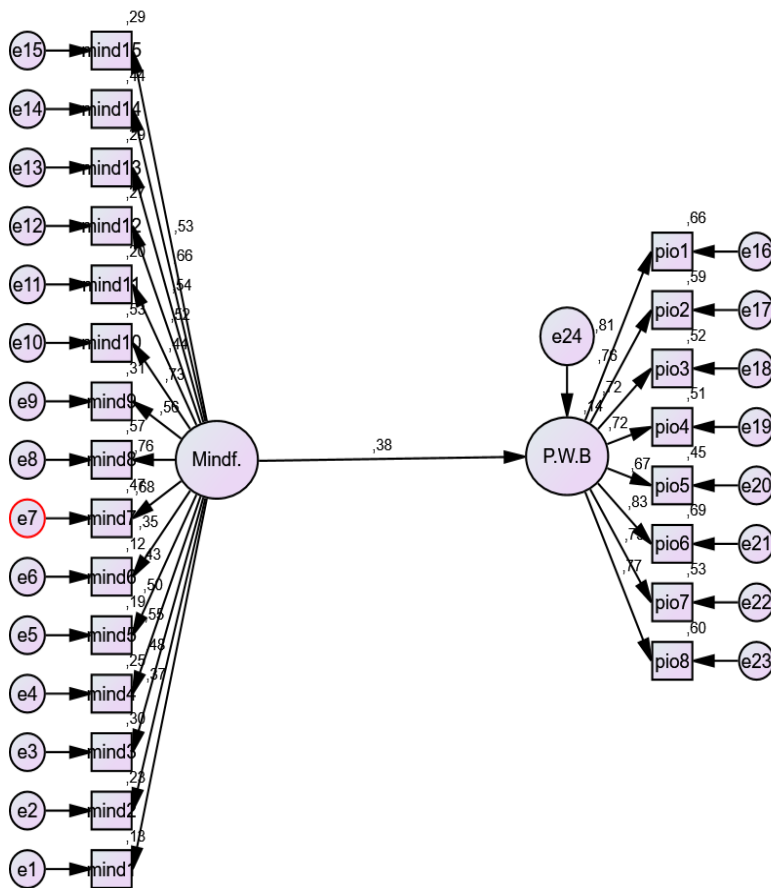


Figure 1. Regression relationship between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing

The main hypothesis of the study was that the work-related psychological flexibility had a mediating effect between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing. In order to test the mediating effect of work-related psychological flexibility, the predictive level of the mindfulness variable on the psychological wellbeing variable was first tested, and the regression coefficient was significant with a value of $.38$, $p < .01$ (Figure 1). This first step for testing the mediating effect indicated that the psychological wellbeing levels of SCs with a high level of mindfulness were also significantly high. In this stage, 14% of the variance in the psychological wellbeing variable was explained by mindfulness. The model fit values obtained in this stage were $\chi^2/df(2,93)$, $p = .00$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = $.92$, Normed Fit Index (NFI) = $.88$, Root Mean Square of Approximate Errors (RMSEA) = $.071$.

In the study, in order to test the mediating effect of work-related psychological flexibility of SCs in the relationship between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing levels, structural equation modeling analysis was performed by adding work-related psychological flexibility to the model (Figure 2). According to the result of this analysis, the predictive coefficient of mindfulness for psychological wellbeing decreased to $.30$, however, the level of significance did not change. On the other hand, it was found that mindfulness significantly predicted the work-related psychological flexibility by $.32$, $p < .01$ in the mediation model, and also, the work-related psychological flexibility had partial mediating effect since the work-related psychological flexibility significantly predicted the psychological wellbeing by $.26$, $p < .01$. This result revealed that mindfulness was partially effective together with the work-related psychological flexibility in explaining the psychological wellbeing levels of SCs. According to the results, it was also

revealed that 20% of the variance in psychological wellbeing was explained by mindfulness and work-related psychological flexibility.

The model fit values, obtained in the model in which the mediating effect of the work-related psychological flexibility in the relationship between mindfulness levels of SCs and their psychological wellbeing was analyzed (Figure 2), were $\chi^2/df(2,55)$, $p=.00$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI)= .90, Normed Fit Index (NFI)= .86, Root Mean Square of Approximate Errors (RMSEA)= .064.

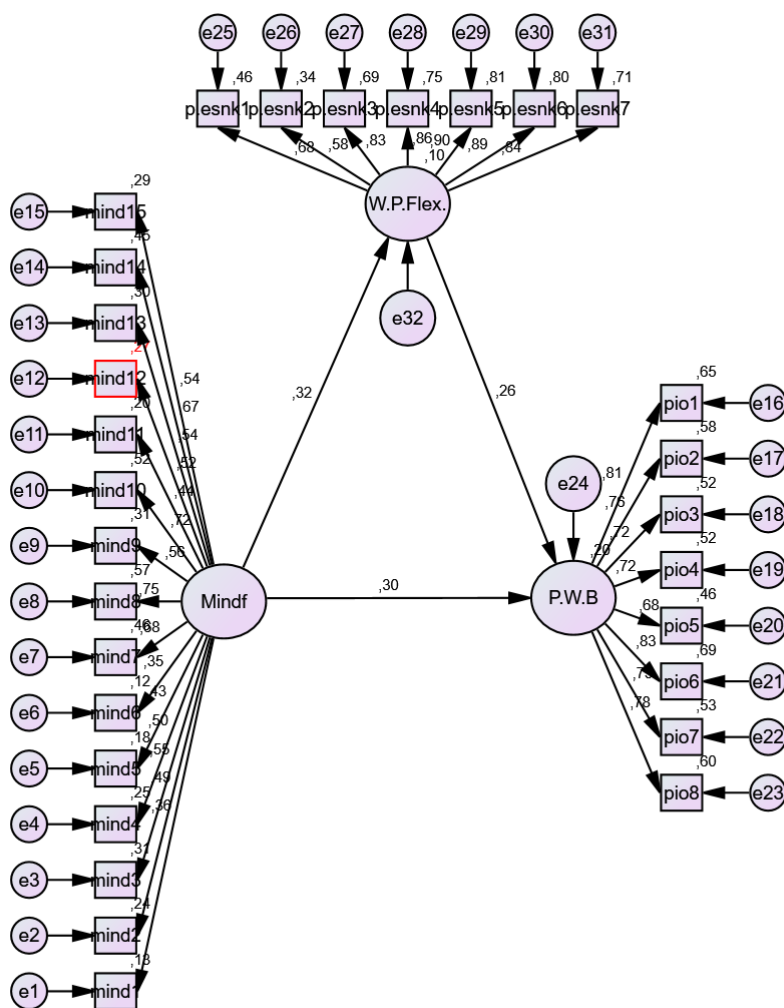


Figure 2. Work-related Psychological Flexibility Mediation Model Analysis

DISCUSSION

In this study, it was revealed that work-related psychological flexibility had a mediating effect on the relationship between the mindfulness levels and psychological wellbeing of SCs within the context of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. This result is compatible with other studies (mental health and life satisfaction) in which psychological flexibility has a mediating role between different variables in the literature (Lucas & Moore, 2019). Although the positive relationship between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing is known, the lack of enough information and research about the factors that have a mediating effect on the relationship between these variables made this study necessary and privileged. This study is also considered to be valuable in terms of understanding the importance of psychological flexibility, the core concept of ACT, which is considered as one of the third wave Cognitive Behavioral approaches, especially in work life. Before the recommendations that can be put forward based on the results of this study, it is essential to discuss the results obtained in line with the research hypotheses with the other relevant studies in the literature.

In this context, it was primarily concluded that the mindfulness levels of SCs positively and significantly predicted their psychological wellbeing levels. This result is clearly supported by a meta-analysis study (Gu et al., 2015), which revealed that

mindfulness significantly predicted the mental health of individuals. The direct relationship of mindfulness with psychological wellbeing was discussed specifically for university students (MacDonald and Baxter, 2017), mothers with and without children with learning disabilities (Tabrizchi & Vahidi, 2015), and school counselors (Purwaningrum et al., 2019). Another meta-analysis study investigated the effects of mindfulness on educators and supported with 19 different studies that mindfulness was a positive and significant predictor of intensive and stressful workloads of educators (Lomas et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies in different samples reveal that mindfulness has a protective effect on mental health (Keng & Liew, 2017; Schultz et al., 2014).

Within the scope of the second hypothesis of the study, it revealed that the work-related psychological flexibility of SCs had a partial mediating effect between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing levels. Psychological flexibility generally supports positive outcomes in individuals, such as life satisfaction (Lucas & Moore, 2019) and happiness (Ryan, 2019). In other words, individuals with a low level of psychological flexibility use more dysfunctional coping strategies in the face of difficulties in their lives. The methods such as experiential avoidance, inability to be in the here and now, and the suppression of emotions can be mostly mentioned among them (Hayes et al., 2006). In this context, it can be considered that the concept of psychological flexibility, which includes discovering individual values, focusing on the present moment and noticing without judgment, is very important in terms of gaining skills that can support the psychological wellbeing of individuals in the long term, just like happiness and life satisfaction. The high level of psychological flexibility of working individuals in their workplaces means that it may be a variable that increases their wellbeing. Ramaci et al. (2019) put forward one of the studies that will support this results in a study they conducted with social workers in Italy. This study revealed that individuals with high psychological flexibility in their workplaces were more open to stressful and challenging situations, were acceptive, had higher levels of wellbeing and also worked more effectively in their work life. Psychological flexibility is also a quite effective skill in increasing the job performance of individuals in many professions and in coping with stress and burn-out (Moran, 2010). Finally, in a recent study, it was concluded that the work-related psychological flexibility significantly predicted the satisfaction of SCs (Günel, 2020).

In this study, the place and importance of psychological flexibility, the core concept of ACT, which is one of the third wave Cognitive Behavioral approaches, in work life was prominently emphasized. When it is considered that the ACT focuses on the context of the behavior and its function to understand what purpose it serves while explaining human behavior (Hayes et al., 2012), in this study, it was emphasized that mindfulness levels should be increased in line with their values to support the psychological wellbeing of SCs (Aydın & Aydın, 2020).

According to the results of this study, various implications and recommendations can be presented to practitioners with different duties and responsibilities in the field on the psychological wellbeing of SCs in relation to work-related psychological flexibility and mindfulness, and to the researchers working on SCs. First, considering the difficulties experienced by SCs in the school environment such as high anxiety (Ekşi, 2006) and occupational burn-out (Yıldız, 2012), it can be thought that mindfulness may help them to gain self-care and awareness as a skill. Indeed, in a recent study conducted in Turkey, it has been revealed that there is a significant relationship between the mindfulness levels of SCs and their trait anxiety and hope levels (Menekşe, 2019). In this context, organizing mindfulness-based training for SCs may increase their psychological wellbeing. This training can be given by experts in the field within the scope of in-service trainings organized for the personnel of the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. Considering the results of this study and related studies in the literature, it can be said that mindfulness significantly explains wellbeing and mental health in individuals of different ages and occupational groups, and also has a protective and preventive effect against stress.

ACT is a value-oriented approach and aims to help individuals to discover their values in the process and to support them to take committed actions towards their values and to improve their psychological flexibility (Hayes et al., 2012). At this point, as it was mentioned before, it can be considered that the fact that SCs are still in a period of identity confusion in Turkey and experience many occupational uncertainties (Tuzgöl-Dost & Keklik, 2012), presence of non-professional duties and expectations from them (Bardoshi et al., 2014) and many difficulties such as burn-out (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016) revealed the need for psychological flexibility of SCs as a skill that is both preventive and intrusive. Furthermore, Corey et al. (2011) emphasized that one of the two main areas that bring high awareness about the counseling profession was the motivation of the profession and the other one was personal problems and conflicts. In this context, problems and conflicts may arise from physical inadequacies in schools and uncertainties in the place and perception of counselor by other teachers and staff. Improving the working conditions of SCs both physically and in terms of the relevant regulations and laws may allow them to provide services more effectively and in line with their values. In this context, it is very important for local and national decision makers to take decisions that will increase the psychological flexibility and thus the psychological wellbeing levels of SCs, who are one of the most important building blocks of schools in contemporary education systems. Finally, in a continuous examination, goal and performance-oriented education and school atmosphere, SCs, who are expected to make definite and clear contributions to these goals and results, can be stuck between the teacher role and the school administrator roles in schools, and they may have difficulty in providing a value-oriented service that supports their psychological flexibility. In this

context, a number of trainings spread throughout the process may be useful to provide the necessary conditions for the provision of effective counseling services in a value-oriented education system for school administrators.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the data obtained as a result of this study, various recommendations can be made for the studies in the future. First, the investigation of the perception of teachers, administrators and other staff in schools regarding the duties and responsibilities of SCs may help to understand the factors affecting the psychological wellbeing of SCs more clearly. Another recommendation is that the results of this quantitative research will be more significant and supportable when the concept of work-related psychological flexibility is investigated with in-depth qualitative data in individuals with certain characteristics. In this context, in the future, researchers can identify SCs who have low professional satisfaction, lack the motivation to develop themselves in their profession, and cannot fulfill their duties and responsibilities in their institution, and conduct qualitative studies to deeply understand their work-related psychological flexibility. Finally, the effectiveness of experimental studies that can be carried out based on acceptance and awareness on the professional satisfaction and wellbeing levels of SCs can be tested.

Although the data obtained with this study are promising in terms of emphasizing the importance of work-related psychological flexibility, which is the core concept in the ACT model, which is a new approach, they are limited in that they were collected with a certain number of participants that can be reached via online methods. Furthermore, the fact that this research is a relational study does not make it possible to establish a cause-effect relationship between variables. In this context, conducting mixed-design studies, longitudinal studies and randomized controlled studies in order to investigate the psychological wellbeing and psychological flexibility levels of SCs in workplaces will lead to important comments and predictions. Finally, conducting the samples in the validity and reliability study of mindfulness, work-related psychological flexibility and psychological wellbeing scales with data obtained from groups that are very different from counselors as a profession can be considered as a limitation of the relevant scales in this study. In the future studies to be conducted with SCs, conducting the study by performing the validity and reliability tests of the relevant scales in the sample of SCs graduating from guidance and counseling program may provide more effective results.

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Statements of publication ethics

We hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

Researchers' contribution rate

The study was conducted and reported with equal collaboration of the researchers.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

The implementation process of the research has been completed in the 2018-2019 academic year. Scientific, ethical, and citation rules were followed during the data collection, reporting and overall writing process of the study. We undertake that the "Kastamonu Education Journal Editorial Board" has no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, all responsibility belongs to the Responsible Author, and this study has not been sent to another academic publishing environment for evaluation.

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