



Article Type: Research Article **Year:** 2020 **V/I:** 6(2) **Pages:** 1-11

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19148/ijhbs.777255>

Citation Information:

Bakalim, O. & Şanal Karahan, F. (2020). Effect of a group leader training program on the group counseling skills of psychological counselor candidates. *The International Journal of Human and Behavioral Science*, 6(2), 1-11. doi: 10.19148/ijhbs.777255

Received: 08/05/2020

Accepted: 28/12/2020

Published: 30/01/2021

Effect of a Group Leader Training Program on the Group Counseling Skills of Psychological Counselor Candidates

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Abstract

It is important to encourage psychological counselor candidates to do practice, as well as provide the theoretical basis for the counseling in a group within the psychological counseling education. Otherwise, they may be reluctant to manage a psychological counseling group. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of a training program on the group counseling skills of counselor candidates. The experimental group of the research consisted of 37 group leader candidates (18 males and 19 females). Quantitative data were obtained using the Skilled Group Counseling Scale. Qualitative data were obtained from evaluation reports of the candidates at the end of the training and analyzed using the content analysis method. Quantitative findings of the research showed that, at the end of the training, all of the total and subscales scores of the Group Counseling Skills Scale of the candidates significantly meaningfully increased. Qualitative findings were grouped under 3 themes, as achievements (group counseling skills, group leader self-efficacy, and professional awareness), boosters, and difficulties.

Keywords: Group Counseling, Group Leader, Psychological Counselor Candidates, Psychological Counselor Training

1. Introduction

The most important aims of psychological counselor training are to make psychological counselor candidates gain basic skills in the practices of group counseling and counseling of an individual by forming a theoretical basis. Even though it is essential to use similar skills to manage the processes of these practices, the process of managing group counseling additionally makes it necessary to acquire different skills. To be able to gain these skills, first, the group leader candidates must be carefully educated about the group dynamics, only then will they be able to put the theoretical knowledge into practice in a group environment (Smaby et al., 1999; Corey, 2000).

The group dynamics consist of a sense of belonging to the group, the group members and leader, and readiness, the norms of the group, feedback, the therapeutic relationship, and interpersonal tensions and expectations. A group leader who affects and is affected by the group dynamics in all of the steps of the psychological counseling process is the most important therapeutic strength (Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017a). Due to this therapeutic strength, the group members can realize the

change they desire (Voltan-Acar, 1991). How effectively the leader can use this power is directly related to his/her personal characteristics, as well as his/her competence in managing a psychological counseling group (Gladding, 1994; Corey, 2000). In other words, the more competent the group leader is in managing the group, the more successful the counseling group will be. In a well-functioning group, members feel that they are accepted by the group, can see what they want more clearly, develop a sense of belonging, and most importantly, they feel safe in the group environment. If these conditions are not met, group members may have tendencies such as hostility, introversion, and indifference. The group leader should be able to monitor these possible situations well and make the necessary interventions if they arise (Ahmad et al., 2017). Therefore, leaders should have the ability to respond in a timely and effective manner, as well as the knowledge of how groups should function best. In order to reach the mentioned level of competence and acquire the skills mentioned above, the preparation process to become a group leader requires effective group leadership training (Corey, 2000). Various principles and standards have been determined by the Association for Specialist in Group Work (ASGW, 2000), American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA, 2007), and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) in group leadership education in the USA (Demir & Koydemir, 2016). According to these standards, group leader candidates should be qualified in 3 basic areas: knowledge, skills, and practice (Aladağ et al., 2011). Based on these standards, various group leader training programs have emerged.

Experiential group leadership training models enable group leader candidates to gain experience in group processes and skills while working on their own personal topics through group life. In this way, the leader candidates see how the group process is perceived through the eyes of the group members (Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017b). In addition, they can observe how the group leader uses group counseling skills. It is necessary to be involved in group life in order to develop effective group leadership skills (Furr & Barret, 2000; Fall & Levitov, 2002; Yalom, 2002).

Skill-based group counseling training programs cover the 18 basic and advanced skills that must be acquired during the discovery, insight, and action stages in the group process, and places more emphasis on the acquisition of these skills (Smaby et al. 1999; Corey, 2000; Masson et al., 2014). In the discovery phase, the skills include making eye contact, body language, verbal follow-up, asking questions, reflecting content, and summarizing. In the insight phase, there are skills such as emotion reflection, self-disclosure, demanding concrete and specific expressions, being instant, identifying and confronting the general condition, and behavior and emotions of the individual. Finally, the skills that are aimed to be gained by the group leader candidates during the action phase include decision making, selection, conclusions, agreement on action, setting deadlines for performing actions, and reviewing goals and actions to determine the outcome (Smaby et al., 1999; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017a). During the training process, these skills are taught theoretically in the classroom environment and then the theoretical knowledge acquired through small group experiences is applied. Candidates who are leaders during applications receive supervision. Some group leader trainings extend the scope of the training by adding skills, as well as joining the process as a group member and managing their group as a leader or co-leader under supervision (Stockton & Toth, 1996; ASGW, 2000; Furr & Barret, 2000; CACREP, 2009; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017a).

In Turkey, a group counseling course is sustained for only one semester at the undergraduate level and it is generally theoretical. The course covers topics such as group theory and dynamics, types of group leadership, ethical standards, and psychological counseling approaches with different types of groups (Voltan-Acar, 1991). Although psychological counseling practices with individuals have been initiated from the undergraduate level, group counseling practices are performed predominantly in the postgraduate period, and in different ways at each university (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2011; Demir & Koydemir, 2016). As a result, those who do not attain a master's degree will graduate without gaining psychological counseling skills within a group.

Thus, it is not clear how the theoretically acquired knowledge can be transformed into skills as a group leader or whether the necessary skills have been acquired (Voltan-Acar, 1991). Therefore, many psychological counselors do not give the necessary value to the psychological group counseling process or hesitate to manage the counseling group (Yalom, 2002; Pamuk & Yıldırım, 2016). However, many studies have shown that group therapy/group counseling is as effective as individual counseling (Corey, 2000; Yalom, 2002; Burlingame et al., 2003). At the same time, group counseling is a powerful method that allows the group leader to reach more individuals in a shorter time and allows individuals to realize that others experience problems similar to their own. Consequently, there is a need to develop or adapt effective training programs that will enable undergraduate level psychological counselor candidates to gain group leader qualifications and skills (Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017a; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017b).

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of a group leader training program on the psychological counseling skills of a group leader training program, which included theoretical information at the undergraduate level, rehearsing, involvement in the group psychological counseling process as a group member, and managing a psychological counseling group under supervision.

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

This research was a mixed-pattern study (Fully mixed concurrent equal status design) , in which semi-experimental and quantitative and qualitative methods were conducted equally together, and the effect of a group leader training program on the psychological counseling skills of Guidance and Psychological Counseling undergraduate students was examined. The main purpose in using this pattern was to learn more about the various aspects of the phenomenon under investigation and provide a more holistic perspective (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A single group of pretest-posttest patterns was used for the quantitative section. In this pattern, the measurements of the subjects related to the dependent variable were obtained using the same working group and the same measurement tool as the pre-test and post-test before and after application (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). Qualitative data were obtained from the assessment reports the students wrote at the end of the semester for the group psychological counseling training course. These data were analyzed using the content analysis method. In order to ensure internal validity, it has been paid attention that the candidates who will participate in the group leader training are selected from the students who are willing to lead a group and do not worry about course grade.

2.2. The Sample Group

The study group of the research consisted of 37 undergraduate students (18 males 19 females) who took the group psychological counseling optional course in the 4th year of the Guidance and Psychological Counseling Department of a public university.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

2.3.1. The Skilled Group Counseling Scale

A measurement tool that demonstrates how group counseling skills are classified and how often they are used by group leader candidates was developed by Smaby et al. (1999). The scale consists of 18 skills used in the group counseling process (discovery, insight, and action). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017). Within the scope of the reliability study, Kappa coefficients showing the consistency between the referees for the psychological counseling session section, with 4 groups evaluated by 3 referees, were obtained as 0.74, 0.72, and 0.72, respectively.

2.3.2. Group Psychological Counseling Course Evaluation Report

In the last session of the group psychological counseling training program, the evaluation reports were taken from the participants as a group leader candidate, where they shared their feelings and thoughts about the training process.

2.4. Data Analysis

Before starting the analysis, it was determined whether the data showed normal distribution or not. For this, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used because the size of the group was smaller than 50 (Büyüköztürk, 2016). It was determined that the data did not show normal distribution. Accordingly, in order to determine whether there was a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the participants, the Wilcoxon signed rank test, one of the nonparametric statistics, was conducted. This test also determined the direction and quantities of the difference between the scores of the 2 associated sets of measurements (Büyüköztürk, 2016). The qualitative data of the research were obtained from the evaluation reports obtained from the students after the psychological counseling training with the group.

2.5. Group Leader Training Program

Psychological counseling training for the group leader candidates lasted 14 weeks, for 3 hr each week. In the first 2 weeks, the entire course was conducted theoretically. In these theoretical courses, the nature and structure of the group, logical framework of psychological counseling groups, group types, and group psychological counseling and ethics were covered. During the 3rd and 4th weeks, for the first 1.5 hr of the lesson, the theoretical lesson was conducted (planning and establishing the group and the initial stage in psychological counseling groups), while in the remaining 1.5 hr of the lesson, role-playing activities related to the counseling process were conducted. In this study, the group leader candidates formed 2 groups. The individuals took the role of group members and group leaders in the classroom using the book "Exercises and Experiments in Psychological Counseling with the Group" written by Voltan-Acar (1991), and portrayed sample group sessions that they rehearsed before class. The non-animated group became an observer. After the role play, the group leader and group members who took the role, and the observers, shared their thoughts and feelings about the role-playing processes in the context of the theoretical issues they acquired and asked the lecturer questions about technical issues. In the 6th, 7th, and 8th weeks, the first part of the course continued theoretically (transition stage, action stage, termination stage, and leadership skills in psychological counseling groups) and in the remaining part, the internal and external group studies were continued.

This time, an interaction group was held, where the lecturer was the group leader, the inner group was a group member, and the outer group was an observer. In this process, group leader candidates had the opportunity to have the experience of being a group member. On the other hand, they had the chance to observe the creation of group rules and norms, and what skills they could use as a group leader. The last 10 min of the lessons were reserved for sharing and technical questions. While these studies were continuing within the scope of the lesson, group leader candidates began to prepare their consent forms and personal information forms, which they gave to the group members for their promotional activities (posters, brochures, information meetings, etc.). Candidates received supervision support from the lecturer during and outside of the course through channels such as face-to-face personal interviews and telephone conversations. The criteria for selection of university students who had developmental problems in the selection of group members, whose age was close to the age of the group leader candidate, and who did not have any severe psychiatric problems were taken into consideration. Within the scope of the course, candidates accepted that the process might be extended if the group needed it, even though 6 sessions were requested from the group leader candidates. The group leader candidates started to manage their own psychological counseling groups at the 9th week, under the supervision of the instructor of the course. Candidates ran the psychological counseling groups, 2 of whom comprised 1 leader and 1 co-leader. On the other hand, the candidates received group supervision during class hours, and they received individual supervision from the instructor of the course

outside of the class. While the supervision was being conducted, subjects such as coping with coercive group members, use of activities in psychological counseling groups, and theoretical approaches in group counseling were discussed in the theoretical part of the course. As the final assignment, the group leader candidates were asked to submit a file about the group they managed. Candidates were specifically instructed about the lack of identity information of the group members in the files. The scope of the file included group rules and norms, consent forms, deciphering 3 of the 6 sessions, 3 other comprehensive session reports, and termination reports. On the other hand, the supervision process continued for the group leader candidates whose psychological counseling sessions had not ended.

3.2. Quantitative Findings

The pre-test and post-test, mean and standard deviation scores of the total and subscale scores of the candidates attending the group leader training with the group's psychological counseling skills are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviations of the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of the Group Counseling Skills

| Items | Pre-test | | Post-test | |
|--|----------|--------|-----------|-------|
| | M | S | M | S |
| ATTENTION | | | | |
| 1. Eye Contact | 19.32 | 4.73 | 22.97 | 3.49 |
| 2. Body Language | | | | |
| 3. Verbal Tracking | | | | |
| QUESTIONING AND REFLECTION | | | | |
| 1. Asking a Question | 18.48 | 4.50 | 22.72 | 3.16 |
| 2. Mirroring Content | | | | |
| 3. Summarizing | | | | |
| BASIC LEVEL EMPATHY | | | | |
| 1. Reflection of Emotion | 18.10 | 3.96 | 22.94 | 2.46 |
| 2. Self-Opening | | | | |
| 3. Requesting Concrete and Specific Expressions | | | | |
| ADVANCED EMPATHY | | | | |
| 1. Being Instant | | | | |
| 2. Identifying the General Problem Status and Behavior of the Individual | 17.16 | 3.66 | 20.91 | 3.51 |
| 3. Confrontation | | | | |
| DECISION MAKING | | | | |
| 1. Decision Making | 16.24 | 3.90 | 20.51 | 3.18 |
| 2. Making a Choice | | | | |
| 3. Results | | | | |
| MAKING AGREEMENT | | | | |
| 1. Consensus on Actions | | | | |
| 2. Setting Deadlines for Taking Action | 17.35 | 3.34 | 20.75 | 3.62 |
| 3. Reviewing Goals and Actions to Determine the Result | | | | |
| PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING SKILLS WITH GROUP TOTAL SCORE | 106.67 | 130.83 | 18.58 | 14.42 |

Table 2: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Group Leaders of the Group Counseling Skills Candidates Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

| Variables | | n | Rank Average | Rank Total | Z | p |
|----------------------------|---------------|----|--------------|------------|-------|------|
| Post-test Paying Attention | Negative Rank | 4 | 15.50 | 62 | 3.78* | 0.00 |
| Pre-test Paying Attention | Positive Rank | 28 | 16.64 | 466 | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|----|-------|--------|-------|------|
| | Equal | 5 | | | | |
| Post-test Asking Question and Reflection | Negative Rank | 5 | 13.10 | 65.50 | 3.97* | 0.00 |
| Pre-test Asking Question and Reflection | Positive Rank | 29 | 18.26 | 529.50 | | |
| | Equal | 3 | | | | |
| Post-test Basic Level Empathy | Negative Rank | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5.14* | 0.00 |
| Pre-test Basic Level Empathy | Positive Rank | 34 | 18.47 | 628 | | |
| | Equal | 2 | | | | |
| Post-test Advanced Empathy | Negative Rank | 5 | 7.20 | 36.559 | 4.48* | 0.00 |
| Pre-test Advanced Empathy | Positive Rank | 29 | 19.28 | | | |
| | Equal | 3 | | | | |
| Post-test Making a Deal | Negative Rank | 6 | 10.50 | 63.532 | 4.01* | 0.00 |
| Pre-test Making a Deal | Positive Rank | 28 | 19 | | | |
| | Equal | 3 | | | | |
| Post-test Total | Negative Rank | 3 | 3.83 | 11.50 | 5.13* | 0.00 |
| Pre-test Total | Positive Rank | 34 | 20.34 | 691.50 | | |
| | Equal | 0 | | | | |

As seen in Table 2, the analysis results showed that there was a significant difference between the psychological counseling skill subdimensions and the total pre-test and post-test scores of the group leader candidates.

3.2. Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings of the research were obtained through the content analysis method of the evaluation reports requested from the participants after the psychological counseling training with the group lasting 14 weeks. In the analysis process, common points obtained from the reports were found and codes were created from these common points. Based on common codes, themes were formed. In direct quotations, the information about the candidate of the group leader was shown by adding the participant number next to the O (observation). As a result of the analysis, 3 main themes were identified: Achievements (group counseling skills, group leader self-efficacy, professional awareness), Supporters, and Difficulties.

3.2.1. Main Theme: Achievements (Sub-themes: Group Counseling Skills, Group Leader Self-Efficacy, Professional Awareness)

The 1st theme obtained from the evaluation reports written by the group leader candidates after 14 weeks of training was determined as Achievements. Three subthemes were formed under the main theme of achievements, comprising group counseling skills, group leader self-efficacy, and professional awareness. Reflecting at the right time within the scope of the group counseling skills (n = 5); using warm-up and group games (n = 2); using listening skills (n = 2); using self-disclosure (n = 5); using the minimum number of incentive skills (n = 3); having more frequent eye contact with group members (n = 1); establishing good relationships and bonds with group members (n = 4); and resolving conflicts within the group and the ability to solve problems (n = 2) were determined. A group leader candidate expressed the benefits of psychological counseling skills with the group as follows:

“When the process started, some of the 1–2 session members resisted, but they started to open up in the next sessions. It was also effective for me to open up as a group leader in reducing their resistance. Although there was a conflict between the members in the group process, the other group leader and I managed this conflict well. We used the skills to get the members to open up,

address their problems, and reflect content using minimum incentives and self-disclosure. In general, I can say that psychological counseling was positive with the group". (O 13)

As part of the group leader self-efficacy sub-theme, relaxation and increased self-confidence as a leader as the group fuses and builds trust (n = 18); a group leader candidate who had been determined to be bolder and use group counseling in his professional life (n = 4) shared the following on this subject:

"I think I can use group counseling without hesitation in my professional life." (O 36)

On the professional awareness sub-theme, more awareness of the psychological counselor identity (n = 9); realizing the importance of group counseling skills (n = 5); self-monitoring as a group leader and noticing the shortcomings (n = 2); and noticing the healing power of the group (n = 9) were determined. A group leader candidate expressed this awareness as follows:

"I can say that this was the best experience of my undergraduate life. The sentence of "touching people's lives" that we mentioned in theoretical lessons became a reality with this experience. The group provided good energy for everyone. I've experienced everything I've learned so far in this 6-session process. And for the first time, I found answers for myself about the question of how to become a psychological counselor" (O 8)

3.2.2. Main Theme: Supporters

The 2nd theme obtained from the evaluation reports written by the group leader candidates after 14 weeks of training were determined as Supporters. Within the scope of this theme, subjects such as positive feedback (n = 4) received from the group members; supportiveness of working with the co-leader (n = 2); and contributions of being a group member (n = 2) were determined. The opinion of a group leader candidate associated with this theme is as follows:

"We were very nervous at first. Towards the end of the process, the members warmed up and stated that they had achieved the purpose of participating in the sessions. This statement showed that the process was effective for them and that we, as leaders, could use techniques and interventions effectively, but not fully, and we were relieved gradually." (O 12)

3.2.3. Main Theme: Difficulties

The 3rd theme obtained from the evaluation reports written by the group leader candidates after 14 weeks of training was determined as Difficulties. Difficulty in forming the group under this theme (n = 5); feeling anxious, nervous, and inadequate at the initial stage (n = 23); coping with difficult group members (n = 5); difficulty in determining the time of the sessions (n = 3); difficulty in maintaining the continuity of the group (n = 2); individual psychological counseling of the group titles of being more difficult than counseling (n = 4); difficulty in finding space (n = 1); and difficulty in dealing with emotions (members and leader) (n = 2). The opinion of a group leader candidate was as follows:

"Before I started consulting with the group, I wondered how I could talk about and reflect content? How long would they listen to me? Would they take me seriously? I was concerned, and frankly, I was very scared." (O 21)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The quantitative findings of the study showed that the 14-week training program significantly increased the group counseling skills of the group leader candidates. Some studies have shown that candidates who were involved in the skilled group counseling training model had increased body language skills and could develop positive attitudes towards being a group leader, and

transfer their skills to the group that they lead (Smaby et al., 1999; Urbani et al., 2002; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017a). In the study of Büyükgöze-Kavas (2011), it was determined that managing a psychological counseling group under supervision increased the group leadership skills of the candidates by 44%. On the other hand, being a member of an experiential training group allowed candidates to gain awareness about their interpersonal relationships, develop a clear perspective on the world of their client, and improve their psychological counseling skills (Furr & Barret, 2000). In the research of Aladağ et al. (2011) and Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017b), it was stated that being in an experiential group was very beneficial for the group leader candidates in terms of seeing how the group life was experienced through the eyes of the group members. According to Yalom (2002), being a member of the life group is the most important part of group leader training. As part of the training provided within the scope of this research, inclusion of the candidates in an experimental group as a group member, and managing their own groups under supervision, may have contributed to the significant increase in the group counseling skills of the group leader candidates.

In this research, the evaluations of the group leader candidates about the education that they received were also examined and it was seen that the opinions of the candidates were gathered under 2 main themes as Achievements and Difficulties. When the achievements theme was examined, it was seen that the candidates expressed that they felt more adequate in their group counseling skills. This qualitative finding was consistent with the quantitative findings of the research stated above.

Another achievement stated by the candidates was group leader self-efficacy. Candidates who attended the training stated that they were initially anxious while managing the group, but as the group became more connected and the sharing increased over time, they felt more confident as the group leader. This was consistent with the findings of Urbani et al. (2002), Aladağ et al. (2011), Lüleci (2015), Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017a), and Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017b). Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura, is not a personality trait but a concept associated with a particular role (Zimmerman, 2000). Professional self-efficacy is defined as the belief that a person can perform well in professional roles (Cherniss, 1993). Accordingly, counseling self-efficacy comprises the beliefs and judgments of the individual about their ability to provide effective counseling assistance to clients in the near future (Larson et al., 1992). It has been determined that conducting psychological counseling under supervision and participating experiential experiences increases the self-efficacy of psychological counselor candidates (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001). Psychological counselor training should aim to improve the self-efficacy of the candidates in counseling with the individual, as well as self-efficacy within group counseling (Springer, 2016).

The psychological counselor candidates who attended the training stated that at the end of the process, they realized their psychological counseling identities, the importance of group counseling skills, their strengths and weaknesses in using these skills, as well as the healing power of the group process. These statements were collected under the theme of professional awareness. In the study of Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017a), the candidates stated that they developed positive attitudes, such as believing in the effectiveness of the group counseling process and willingness to be the group leader, at the end of the training that they attended. When the process of group counseling is explained only theoretically, students may not be able to adequately grasp the effectiveness of the group experience. In this study, the experiences of the candidates as a psychological counseling member and group leader may have contributed to their understanding of the power and importance of group counseling, and helped them to realize the place and importance of this experience in the guidance and psychological counseling profession.

Group leader candidates stated that they faced some difficulties in the training process. The most expressed challenge was the intense anxiety of the candidates regarding group management as a

leader at the beginning of the group process. Similar concerns have been reported in the studies of Aladağ et al. (2011), Büyükgöze-Kavas (2011), and Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017a). It is a common and developmental situation that group leader candidates experience anxiety about managing a group under supervision. This anxiety should be perceived as part of the process of learning and development (Christensen & Kline, 2001). The supportive and encouraging approach of the supervisor has been shown to be effective in reducing these anxieties over time (Christensen & Kline, 2001; Aladağ et al., 2011; Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2011; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017b). Similarly, in this study, the candidates stated that their anxiety at the beginning of the process decreased over time. Other challenges expressed by the candidates included coping with difficult group members, difficulty in maintaining the continuity of the group, additional skills required by group counseling leadership, and difficulty in dealing with emotions (members and leader) related to termination. As these situations require advanced skills, these difficulties are expected at the undergraduate level (Corey, 2000). It is believed that candidates will develop their skills if there are more opportunities to manage more groups in supervision in the future. Other difficulties mentioned were difficulties in determining the time of the sessions and finding the place to hold the sessions. Similar difficulties were expressed in the research of Büyükgöze-Kavas (2011); Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017a), and Pamukçu & Kağnıcı (2017b). These situations were thought to be due to the lack of a standard for group counseling courses, a suitable environment for group counseling at some universities, and practice at the undergraduate level. It is estimated that the mentioned difficulties will be overcome by completing these deficiencies.

As a result, in this research, a 14-week training program was applied to students within the scope of a group counseling elective course. At the end of the training, there was an increase in the group counseling skills of the group leader candidates. However, individual and group counseling skills are gained over time and with experience (Demir & Koydemir, 2016). It was surprising that after 14 weeks of training, there was an increase in all of the skills. The fact that the supervisor was the lecturer of the course, which is, an evaluative role, may have caused this situation. In other words, the group leader candidates may not realistically express the skills that they think they have achieved if they experience exam score anxiety. Indeed, in the literature, it has been suggested that the supervisor and the lecturer who teaches the course should be different people (Furr & Barret, 2000). On the other hand, it is not known whether this increase in skills was based on the applied training, since the students took the individual counseling practice course during the same semester. The 2 cases mentioned are considered as the limitations of this research.

In order to make group leadership education effective, candidates are required to provide theoretical information about the group process, to give them the opportunity to observe a group process, the candidates must go through a process in which they can become a group member and manage a group under supervision (ASGW, 2000). However, it is important that these training programs are structured in accordance with the culture and educational environment that they will be implemented in.

In order to obtain more evidence of the effectiveness of the training program implemented within the scope of this research, it is recommended to repeat the research with different sample groups and use the control group pattern in these studies. In addition, there is a need for research on developing different group leader training programs and comparing the effectiveness of these programs. It is recommended to take into account that supervision is not given by the lecturer of the course in the training programs. It is thought that the introduction of these studies into the literature will lead to the spread of standardized group leader training programs suitable for Turkish culture from the undergraduate level in the future. Thus, the necessary skills of group leader candidates will develop from the undergraduate level. As a result, they will be able to incorporate group counseling practices in their professional lives.

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