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Examination of Psychological Counseling and Guidance Program Students' Psychological Resilience, Life Orientation, and Coping Resources during the COVID 19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT
In this study, the coping sources with the levels of optimism and psychological resilience during the COVID 19 pandemic were examined. A descriptive survey model was used. Online information collection tools were sent to all students (320 undergraduate and master's students) enrolled in the Psychological Counselling and Guidance (PCG) program. The data obtained with the tools from both surveys answered by 196 participants were analyzed using the SPSS 17 program. Personal information form, the Brief Psychological Resilience Scale, and Life Orientation Scale were used. The results revealed that students' levels of resilience and optimism were high, their levels of optimism predicted their resilience, and they saw themselves as sufficient to cope with difficulties during the COVID 19 pandemic period. It can be said that positive character traits such as optimism and resilience protect people from the negative feelings caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. Implications for future research and practice were discussed.

COVID 19 pandemic has been influencing the world for about two years. The first COVID 19 case in Turkey was diagnosed on March 11, 2021, it was announced that measures should be taken to protect people against the pandemic throughout the country, and it was decided that education would be carried out remotely as of March 16, 2020, due to the pandemic. With this decision, university students' daily routines and living conditions have changed, and their whole life has been limited to the home environment. While trying to carry out the distance education period, which students had not experienced before, they had to remember their living habits with their families again.

Yorguner, Bulut, and Akvardar (2021) conducted a study with 2583 university students; after the universities suspended face-to-face education, 97% of the students left their place of residence (dormitory and home), and 85% returned and started living with their parents. In this period, 31% of the participants stated that they play more digital games, 73% use social media more, and 77% spend more time watching TV series and movies. In this case, young people have postponed their personal and career plans and distanced themselves from their social relations.

Although the World Health Organization stated that young people are not a risk group for being infected with COVID 19, Germani et al. (2020) stated that sudden changes in the lives of university students as of the developmental period they are in would cause psychological problems. In the study by Dhar, Ayittey, and

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Sarkar (2020), with 15,543 university students, 44.59% of university students have severe anxiety, and 48.41% have moderate anxiety due to the stress caused by the pandemic period. In addition, the lack of clear information about the universities' transition period to face-to-face education increases the uncertainty. As the result of this uncertainty; negative outcomes such as anxiety (Burns, Dagnall & Holt, 2020), depression (Wang et al., 2020), substance use, sleep and eating disorders (Liu et al., 2020), stress and insecurity (Wen, et al., 2021) have been reported by many different studies. In addition, Lai et al. (2020) stated that the difficulties experienced in reaching safe information about COVID 19 and reaching social support also cause serious anxiety and depression symptoms in university students.

Coping Strategies

University students who have high psychological resilience and positive thinking skills and who exercise experience fewer mental health diseases, and these are important coping strategies against diseases (Lai et al., 2020). Baloran (2020) examined coping strategies during the COVID 19 period in his study with university students and listed the most cited coping strategies as follows: Adhering to strict personal protective measures (e.g., mask and hand washing) (90.19%); avoiding public places to minimize exposure to COVID 19 (80.38%); to learn about the prevention and infection mechanism of COVID 19 (68.87%), using social networks such as Social media and Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube (58.87) and chatting with family and friends to reduce stress and get support (48.87%). In another study, Jin and Li (2021) stated the coping strategies that university students used during the COVID 19 pandemic as follows: social support (support from family and friends), acceptance (adaptation to unchanging events), psychological withdrawal (attention and mind diversion), benevolence (helping the person in need) and self-care (protecting one's health). In addition, the unhealthy coping strategies used were found to be avoidance, self-blame, and substance use. Such coping strategies cause more psychological distress and depressive symptoms (Kamaludin et al., 2020).

Psychological Resilience

For individuals to cope with difficult periods healthily, their high psychological resilience can be seen as a protective factor/has a mechanism that provides support. Smith et al. (2008) defined the concept of resilience as the ability to recover from stressful situations. In addition, Jakovljevic (2018), states that resilience includes the state of growth, development, and betterment. When we look at the studies on resilience among university students, it has been seen that students with high resilience have low psychological stress levels, have high academic success, and cope with academic difficulties more easily (Bovier, Chamot, & Perneger, 2004). It has been found that university students with low psychological resilience are more negatively affected by stressful situations and experience greater adjustment problems (Edward et. al., 2001). In addition, Quintiliani et al. (2020) stated that resilience skills have a protective effect on academic difficulties caused by the pandemic.

Optimism

The COVID 19 pandemic period is a stressful time for many people and has revealed many unusual situations. Situations encountered can be either positive or negative. However, the expectation that it will be positive is considered optimism (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 2001: 205). Optimism is also used to mean the ability to adapt to life (Daco, 1989: 424). It is thought that it is important that young people who continue their higher education have a high level of optimism about coping with this new situation they face. Individuals who can go through this period strongly will be able to gain strength against various difficulties they will face in the future. Working with university students, Yu and Luo (2018) found that optimism protects against depression and anxiety by promoting positive coping.

Optimism and psychological resilience affect each other positively. This relationship has been evaluated within the scope of only a few studies in the literature. Eyni et al. (2020) tried to show the relationship between optimism and resilience, and anxiety caused by COVID 19 by using the modeling method. According to the results of the study, optimism, resilience and perceived social support play an important role in reducing the anxiety caused by COVID 19 in students, and supporting students through these three components mentioned above can be effective in reducing the anxiety caused by COVID 19. Similarly, Cetin and Anuk (2020)

investigated the resilience of university students during COVID 19 in Turkey. According to the results of the study, it was found that the level of resilience of students who think optimistically about the future is higher than students who think negatively.

As a result, it is thought that university students' academic/psychological needs have changed, and their psychological resilience levels have been affected by the pandemic conditions of COVID 19 pandemic. When we look at the program qualifications of the Guidance and Psychological Counseling field in our country, it is seen that there are outcomes that support students' coping and well-being. In the courses taken within the scope of this program (human relations and communication, psychological counseling principles and techniques, counselling theories, individual and group counselling), students get to know themselves, realize coping resources, and create new healthy coping resources. In addition, in this study, it is assumed that students who opt for the Guidance and Psychological Counseling department perceive life more optimistically and have a higher level of psychological resilience due to their dispositions and education. In this context, the researchers aimed to determine the academic/psychological needs of the students of the PCG program, their psychological resilience, and optimism levels, which are thought to help them cope with the pandemic period healthily and their evaluations of coping with difficulties.

For this purpose, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What is the relationship between the psychological resilience and optimism levels of the participants?
2. What are the participants' evaluations of coping with difficulties?

Method

Research Model

This research was designed in a descriptive survey model. It aims to examine the relationship between PCG undergraduate and master's students' psychological resilience and optimism variables during the COVID 19 pandemic by taking into account the time dimension and determining their evaluations for coping with difficulties.

Participants

The data were collected from students who continue their education in Guidance and Psychological Counselling (PCG) undergraduate and master programs at a university in the Marmara region in the 2019-2020 academic years. In this study, purposeful sampling method was used to recruitment participants. Data were collected by sending online information collection tools to all students (320 undergraduate and master's students) enrolled in the program on March 29, 2020, and August 18, 2020. Data were collected from 285 people in the first measurement and 214 in the second measurement. While the data were combined through pseudonyms, analyses were made using the data of 196 people who filled out the scales in both measurements. Written informed consent forms were obtained from all participants. The informed consent form included potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, and participants' rights to withdraw. Participants' nicknames were reserved by researchers.

Data Collection Tools

Brief Resilience Scale. The scale was developed by Smith et al. (2008) to determine the psychological resilience levels of individuals. The scale, adapted to Turkish culture by Dogan (2015), consists of 6 items. Three items of the scale are coded in reverse. The scale, prepared in a five-point Likert type, is answered in the range of "not suitable" to "completely suitable". The score distribution of the scale ranges from 0 to 30. A high score on the scale indicates high psychological resilience. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .83 and the Cronbach alpha reliability as .81.

Life Orientation Test. To determine students' life orientation, the scale was developed by Scheier and Carver (1985), adapted to Turkish by Aydın and Tezer (1991) with validity-reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha value was .72 and .80 in our study. The scale is in five-point Likert type and consists of 12 items, with the response options "0-strongly disagree", "1-disagree", "2-undecided", "3-agree", and "4-strongly agree". Items 3, 8, 9, and 12 on the scale were reverse scored. In addition, there are four items (2, 6, 7, and 10) that are not scored in any direction and are called filler items. The remaining four items (3, 4, 12, and 14) indicate pessimism, and

four items (7, 9, 10, and 15) indicate optimism. The score distribution of the scale ranges from 0 to 32. The increase in the score obtained from the scale indicates that the students' optimism levels increase.

Survey Questions. The survey, created by the researchers, includes demographic and rating questions. A five-point, a closed-ended question including answers ranging from "very insufficient" to "very sufficient" was asked for participants' self-assessment of coping with difficulties during the COVID 19 pandemic period.

In the second measurement, seven closed-ended questions were asked, which were thought to be related to coping with the difficulties they experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic, ranging from "slightly effective" to "very effective".

Statistical Analysis

SPSS v23.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) software was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used for scoring the participants' socio-demographic characteristics, resilience, and life orientation test. In both measures, resilience (Skewness first=-0.219; Skewness second=-0.051; Kurtosis first=0.189; Kurtosis second=0.088) and optimism (Skewness first=-0.341; Skewness second=-0.592; Kurtosis first=-0.438; Kurtosis second=0.318) variables were found to be normally distributed (Büyüköztürk, Çokluk, & Köklü, 2012).

Additionally, t-Test, correlation and regression analyzes were used to determine the relationship between participants' levels of resilience and optimism. Participants' evaluations of coping with difficulties were measured by survey questions. Frequency and percentage were given for each item of the questions asked within the framework of categorical variables and the qualitative dimension of the research.

Results

The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Information about the participants

		First Measurement	Second Measurement
		N (%)	N (%)
	TOTAL	196(100.0)	196(100.0)
Gender	Female	158 (81.0)	158 (81)
	Male	38 (19.0)	38 (19.0)
	1	49 (25.0)	49 (25.0)
	2	48 (24.5)	48 (24.5)
Class Level	3	43 (21.9)	43 (21.9)
	4	44 (22.4)	44 (22.4)
	YL	12 (6.1)	12 (6.1)
	Alone	8 (4.1)	4 (2.0)
	2 people	13 (6.6)	13 (6.6)
	3 people	29 (14.8)	33 (16.9)
Number of people living with	4 people	76 (38.8)	76 (38.8)
	5 people	49 (25.0)	49 (25.0)
	6 people	11 (5.6)	11 (5.6)
	7 and over	10 (5.1)	10 (5.1)
	1 room	1 (0.5)	0
	2 rooms	26 (13.3)	23 (11.7)
Number of rooms in the house	3 rooms	87 (44.4)	90 (45.9)
	4 rooms	57 (29.1)	58 (29.6)
	5 rooms	20 (10.2)	10 (5.1)
	6 rooms	5 (2.6)	5 (2.6)
	Self	-	2 (1.0)
	Family Member	-	6 (3.1)
COVID 19 Diagnosis Status	Neighbor	4 (2.0)	29 (14.8)
	Relative	20 (10.2)	89 (45.4)
	None	172 (87.8)	70 (35.7)

As seen in Table 1, 158 (81%) of the 196 participants in the data set in which the analyses were performed were female, and 38 (19%) were male. 49 (25%) of the participants were in their first year, 48 (25%) in their second year, 43 (22%) in their third year, 44 (22%) in their fourth year, and 12 (6%) are continuing their education in the master's level. In the first measurement, the participants were asked the number of people they lived with in their homes; 4.1% lived alone, 6.6% lived with two people, 14.8% lived three people, 38.8% living four people, 25% living with five people, 5.6% living with six people and 5.1% stating that they live with seven or more people. Additionally, participants were also asked how many rooms the house they live in has, and approximately 45 per cent of them stated that they live in a three-room house, 30 percent in a four-room house, 14 percent in a two-room house, and 11 percent in a five-room house. Similar results were found in the second measurement.

In both measurements, the participants were asked whether they had a relative diagnosed with COVID 19, and in the first measurement, 87.4% stated that they had no acquaintances, 10.1% stated that their relatives and, 2% stated that they had no acquaintances that their neighbors were diagnosed. In the second measurement, 35.7% reported that they had no acquaintance with the diagnosis, 45.4% reported that their relatives, 14.8% their neighbors, 3.1% their family members and, 1% themselves were diagnosed.

What is the relationship between the psychological resilience and optimism levels of the participants?
The descriptive statistics regarding the psychological resilience and optimism levels of the students during the COVID 19 pandemic are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on Psychological Resilience and Optimism levels

	Psychological Resilience		Optimism	
	first	Second	first	second
N	196	196	196	196
M	19.37	19.02	27.90	27.43
Range	18.00	19.00	26.00	32.00
Min	10.00	10.00	13.00	8.00
Max	28.00	29.00	39.00	40.00
SS	3.41	3.37	5.03	5.60
Skewness	-.219	-.051	-.341	-.592
Kurtosis	.189	.088	-.438	.318

As seen in Table 2, the arithmetic mean of the participants' resilience scores was 19.37±3.41 in the first measurement, 19.02±3.37 in the second measurement. The arithmetic mean of optimism scores was 27.90±5.03 in the first measurement and 27.43±5.60 in the second measurement. Although cut-off scores were not determined during the adaptation phase of either scale, high scores from the scale indicate high levels of resilience (Doğan, 2015) and optimism (Aydın &Tezer, 1991).
Whether the psychological resilience and optimism levels of the students differed in the first and second measurements was examined with the related samples using t-Test analysis, and it was found that the students' psychological resilience levels during the COVID 19 pandemic [$t_{(195)} = 1.642$, $p>.05$] and optimism levels [$t_{(195)} = 1.495$, $p>.05$] did not differ in the first and second measurements.

To examine the relationship between students' psychological resilience and optimism, first of all, Pearson moments correlation analysis was performed, and it was found that there is a moderate positive correlation (first: .437, second: .426, $p<.01$) between psychological resilience and optimism levels in the first and second measurements. To understand the nature of the relationship between resilience and optimism, the data were analyzed by regression analysis, and the results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Results on Resilience and Optimism

	Variable	B	Standard Error	ß	T	p
First Measurement	Constant	11.110	1.241		8.955	.000
	Optimism	.296	.044	.437	6.766	.000
	R = .437		R^2= .191			
	F= 45.781		p= .000			
Second Measurement	Constant	11.972	1.095		10.931	.000
	Optimism	.257	.039	.426	6.563	.000
	R = .426		R^2= .182			
	F= 43.067		p= .000			

In Table 3, it is understood that the optimism scores in the first measurement are significant predictors of the level of resilience (R=-.437; R^2=.191; F= 45.781; p<.05) in the first measurement, and the optimism scores in the second measurement are significant predictors of the level of resilience (R=-0,426; R^2=182; F= 43.067; p<.05) in the second measurement. When the explained variance is examined, it is seen that the optimism scores explain 19.1% of the total variance of the psychological resilience level in the first measurement and 18.2% in the second measurement. According to the regression analysis results of the first and second measurements; regression equations can be defined as Resilience= 11,110+0.296 Optimism for the first measurement and Resilience= 11,972+0.257 Optimism for the second measurement.

The data regarding the participants' evaluations regarding their self-efficacy in coping with the difficulties in the COVID 19 pandemic period in the first and second measurements are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Participants' self-evaluations on coping with difficulties

Feel sufficient dealing with difficulties	First Measurement			Second Measurement		
	f	%	Mean	F	%	Mean
Highly insufficient	5	2.6		3	1.5	
Insufficient	10	5.1		11	5.6	
Average	76	38.8		64	32.7	
Sufficient	84	42.9	3.54	80	40.8	3.71
Highly sufficient	21	10.7		38	19.4	
Total	196	100.0		196	100.0	

Evaluation of the participants in the first and second measurements, as they consider themselves competent to cope with the difficulties in the COVID 19 pandemic period in the first and second measurement; 2.6% - 1.5% were very insufficient, 5.1% - 5.6% were insufficient, 38.8% - 32.7% were moderately sufficient, 42.9% - 40.9% were sufficient, and 10.7 - 19.4% were quite sufficient.

In the second measurement, the students were asked about their evaluations of the resources to cope with the difficulties they experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic period, and their evaluations are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Evaluations of the difficulties that participants experienced during the COVID 19 period

	Very little effective	Less effective	Average	Very effective	Highly effective	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lessons I took during my education	3,1	17,9	30,1	39,8	9,2	100,0
Mt therapeutic skills	3,6	3,6	38,3	36,7	17,9	100,0
My social relationships	3,1	5,1	16,3	41,8	33,7	100,0
Living away from my family	21,9	24,5	18,4	16,3	18,9	100,0
Previous difficult life events	7,1	21,4	25,0	28,6	17,9	100,0
My positive attitude toward the future	8,7	10,2	15,3	35,7	30,1	100,0
Problem-solving skills	,5	4,6	26,5	38,8	29,6	100,0

As seen in Table 5, the coping resources, which are highly effective as the students say, in coping with the difficulties they experience during the COVID 19 period are social relations (75.5%), problem-solving skills (68.4%), positive attitude toward the future (65.8%), therapeutic skills (54.6%), courses taken during their education (49%), difficult life events (46.5%) and living away from family (35.2%).

Discussion, Conclusions, and Suggestions

This study, it is aimed to determine the psychological resilience and optimism levels of PCG students during the COVID 19 pandemic period and their evaluations of coping with difficulties. In the study, measurements were made twice, at the beginning of the pandemic period (March 29, 2020) and five months after the announcement of the pandemic (August 16, 2020). In both applications, PCG undergraduate students' self-evaluation of psychological resilience, optimism, and the difficulties they experienced during COVID 19 were measured. The data obtained from the first measurement showed that their assessments of resilience, optimism, and coping with difficulties were above the average.

According to the results obtained from two applications, the psychological resilience and optimism levels of the students are above average. In the first and second measurements, the psychological resilience and optimism levels of the students did not differ. In this study, in the first and second applications, the students were asked how competent they were in coping with the difficulties they experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic period, and in both applications, the results were above average (in the first application; 38.8% moderate, 42.9% sufficient, 10.7% very sufficient and in the second application; 32.7% moderate, 40.8% sufficient, 19.4% very sufficient). In the second application, it was found that the average level of self-efficacy increased. In the studies on the effect of mental health in the literature during the period of COVID 19; It has been emphasized that there can be negative effects in every part of society (Askın et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019; Wanng et al. 2020). Although there is no study with PCG students during the COVID 19 pandemic period, there are many studies with university students. Studies have shown that university students have an increase in mental health problems (Lai et al., 2020), an increase in anxiety levels (Dhar et al., 2020; Alnıcık et al. 2021), during the COVID 19 pandemic period, and that they do not feel well mentally (Aker & Midik, 2020). Meanwhile, being constantly exposed to news about deaths or infection worldwide as a result of COVID 19 caused individuals to experience psychological problems such as anxiety, restlessness and depression (Stankovska et al., 2020).

Along with the pandemic, the efforts of societies to produce quick solutions have created more positive effects in responding to the crises created by the pandemic in societies with relatively stronger family ties (Kocak & Harmancı, 2020). For individuals to cope with difficult processes healthily, their high psychological resilience can be considered as a mechanism that provides support. On the other hand, in a study conducted by Dusmez

and Yaycı (2020) with PCG students, it was found that there was a significant difference between the advanced and lower grade levels in the stress-coping behaviors of PCG students. In this case, it can be said that PCG training increases the coping skills of individuals. At the same time, it is thought that the psychological resilience and optimism levels of PCG students will be high in stressful situations as a result of the education they receive. In our study, it can be said that the students maintain their psychological resilience and that the support resources affect this.

To determine the dynamics behind students' resilience, the relationship between resilience and optimism levels and students' evaluations of coping with difficulties were examined. In another finding of the study, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between students' resilience and optimism in both measurements and that optimism predicted resilience. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there is a high relationship between resilience and optimism (Karacaoglu & Koktas 2016; Padhy et al., 2015). Benson (2007) considers optimism as a tendency to see positive aspects in the events encountered. The results obtained to explain the sufficiency of their ability to handle the events experienced during the pandemic period by controlling their anxiety without catastrophizing. The diversity of coping behaviors has an important place in resilience (Cohen, 1984; Lazarus, 1993). Individuals with high psychological resilience have positive emotions, and these people use humor, optimistic thinking, and relaxation techniques as coping resources (Jin & Li, 2021). Beddoe et al. (2013) refer to optimism, competence, knowledge, and empathy in determining individual factors, which are one of the factors affecting psychological resilience. It is thought that positive character traits such as optimism and resilience will protect people from the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. Furthermore, some studies found the religious and spiritual rituals are the most preferred coping strategies during the COVID 19 pandemic (Kadiroğlu, Guducu-Tufekci, & Kara, 2021; Salman et al., 2022).

In the order of priority, areas that the participants consider themselves competent to cope with difficulties are; social relations (75.5%), problem-solving skills (68.4%), positive attitude toward the future (65.8%), therapeutic skills (54.6%), courses taken during their education (49%), difficult life events (46.5%) and living away from family (35.2%). When the coping ways of the participants were examined, they made explanations about seeing the positive aspects of the events and providing support by transferring this perspective to their social environment. Being able to see the positive aspects of events is also a finding that coincides with optimism. At the same time, Matlin and Gawron (1979) stated the tendency of optimism toward positivity in the process of information processing.

Positive thinking, believing that this period will end, is the way of thinking that supports coping. Similarly, students' flexibility, positive thinking, and exercise were found to be predictors of less serious mental health effects during the pandemic period (Lai et al., 2020, Breslau et al., 2014). In parallel, Ogueji et.al. (2022) stated that coping strategies of individuals in England are socializing with loved ones (e.g., through video calls)", "engaging in exercise", "being occupied with jobs", "being occupied with studies", "hope", "avoiding negative news on COVID 19. The lack of social and relationships experienced during the pandemic may negatively affect psychological well-being (Holt-Lunstad, 2007:127). In the study, the participants stated that they helped their families, friends, and those in need. In addition, most of them stated the courses they received as coping skills. We can talk about the importance of the courses given in the PCG field and having a program that provides competencies in dealing with crises and anxiety. Students emphasized the positive effect of sharing accurate information about the pandemic with their relatives in coping. Ocalan and Uzar-Ozcetin (2020) talked about the impact of having accurate information and taking precautions in reducing stress and anxiety during the pandemic period. Having a university education may have affected their scientific perspective.

It was revealed that the high levels of optimism and psychological resilience of PCG students and their social relations and problem-solving skills in coping with the difficulties they experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic period are related to the program they are studying. Akan (2022) also emphasized the importance of intervention programs to increase resilience in order to heal the psychology of individuals affected by the COVID 19 process.

It can be recommended to expand the data of this study with both students studying at different universities and students studying in different mental health fields (Social Services Applications and Psychology) in future

studies. In addition, it can be suggested that university students should be given courses that will increase their coping skills, increase their psychological resilience and optimism levels.

Limitations

The results of our study should be evaluated according to some limitations. One of these limitations is that it is intended for PCG students studying at a single university. In addition, it is limited to the coping resources that the researchers determined by using the literature.

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