RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Mediator Role of Cognitive Flexibility Levels in the Relationship Between Authenticity Levels and Multicultural Counseling Competence Perceptions of Psychological Counselors

Mehmet Buğra AKALIN[a] 🆔 & Zehni KOÇ[a] 🆔

ᵃGazi University, Ankara, Türkiye.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of cognitive flexibility levels in the relationship between counselors' authenticity levels and their perceptions of multicultural counseling competence. In the study, a relational survey model was employed. The study group consisted of 617 counselors, 493 female and 124 males, living in various cities in Turkey. "Personal Information Form", "Authenticity Scale", "Multicultural Counseling Competencies Scale" and "Cognitive Flexibility Inventory" were used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and PROCESS Macro Model 4 was used to analyze the data. As a result of the study, it was determined that there were significant positive correlations between counselors' authenticity levels, cognitive flexibility levels, and their perceptions of multicultural counseling competencies. While the direct effect of authenticity levels on multicultural counseling competence perceptions was insignificant, the total and indirect effects were found to be significant. In this context, it was found that the cognitive flexibility levels of the counselors play a full mediating role in the relationship between their authenticity levels and their perceptions of multicultural counseling competence. In other words, it was found that counselors' levels of authenticity increased their perceptions of multicultural counseling competence through their cognitive flexibility. The results were discussed and evaluated within the framework of the relevant literature. Finally, based on the findings of the study, suggestions were made for researchers and practitioners.

People are influenced by culture from the moment they are born and this continues throughout their lives. So much so that when a baby is born, even the color of the clothes and the toys given are shaped according to the gender roles scheme of the culture of that society; when a person dies, the funeral ceremony is organized according to the culture of that society. It can be said that the process of acculturation and acculturation, which begins at birth and covers the whole of human life, has a significant impact on the formation of the individual's identity and the shaping of his/her perspective on life. In this context, culture is a structure that exists in every aspect of people's lives and plays an important role in making sense of their lives. In fact, culture provides a

subjective reality to a society or an individual (Ivey et al., 2002; Parekh, 2002). On the other hand, considering that there is no single reality for human beings, and the reality can be interpreted in different ways according to subjective perceptions (Solso et al., 2018), it is essential to show a sensitive attitude towards individuals with different cultures in interpersonal relationships and psychological counseling process.

In the literature, culture is defined in various ways. Kağıtçıbaşı (2000, p.37) defines the concept of culture as "a set of ideas, practices, norms and meanings that put behaviors into a system", "shared symbols and meanings" and "experiences that lead to predictable and specific differences in the behavior of a group"[1]. Parekh (2002) describes culture as a system of meaning and significance shaped through history, as well as a set of beliefs and customs that a group of people use to interpret, organize, and structure their individual and collective lives. In another definition, culture is explained as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from others" (Holstede & Hofstede, 2005, p.4). From all these definitions, it is seen that culture refers to a comprehensive structure. In addition to indicating the differences between groups, culture also includes personal dimensions such as gender, age, psychological maturity level, personal values, clothing style, aesthetic sense, socioeconomic level, and education level that may differ even between two individuals living in the same house (Barrott, 2014; Bektaş, 2006; Ratzlaff et al., 2000; Sue et al., 1992). In this context, it is stated that all relationships have a multicultural structure (Pedersen, 2000). From this point of view, the multiculturalism that emerges in human relations can be reflected in the psychological counseling process and can have an impact on the quality of the process.

The concept of "multiculturalism", which refers to the ability of different cultures in society to live together in harmony, within the framework of respect, without suppressing or excluding each other (Kağnıcı, 2019; Pedersen, 1998), and which arises from a sociological need, has been reflected in the psychological counseling process, which functions as a microcosm of social relations, with multicultural counseling approach that emerged in the US. Multicultural counseling approach (Sue et al., 1992), which first emerged as a need for racial diversity with the concern of adapting traditional interventions for White Euro-Americans, the dominant group in the US, to African, Latino, Indian, and Asian Americans, is defined as the "fourth power" in the relevant literature after psychoanalytic, behavioral and humanistic theory (Pedersen, 1998). While the concept of culture used to be more applicable to racial differences, the scope of this concept has expanded today. In fact, it is stated that culture includes many dimensions other than race, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and religion (Sue et al., 1992).

Authenticity, which refers to an individual's displaying behaviors in accordance with their true self and truths rather than external criteria or expectations (Maslow, 2011; Rogers, 1961), is a concept that is thought to be related to multicultural counseling competencies. Authenticity, which is accepted as an important feature that should be present in counselors (Corey, 2015) and given importance in counselor education (İşmen Gazioğlu & Demir, 2020), is shown among the important first steps that need to be structured such as empathy and positive respect in the therapeutic relationship (Hanna et al., 1999). In a limited number of studies in the literature, it is seen that inauthenticity is related to multicultural counseling competencies (Prince, 2003). Relational authenticity is a dimension of authenticity that includes transparency in communication and the ability to express oneself openly with one's good and bad sides (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). It can be said that relational authenticity overlaps to a great extent with some of the competencies defined among intercultural communication competencies (Chen, 1987) such as self-disclosure, being transparent to other people, and having a relaxed attitude in communication processes. On the other hand, Young (2019) states that in order for counselors to be culturally sensitive, they should not evaluate their clients' cultures with stereotypes and be aware that each client's cultural background is unique. In this context, counselors with high levels of authenticity when working with clients from different cultures can more easily get rid of the stereotypes of the dominant culture, go beyond the usual forms of communication, and thus develop a natural, transparent and authentic therapeutic relationship with their clients.

Another variable thought to be related to multicultural counseling competence (MCC) perceptions is cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibility is defined as the ability to respond to sudden and unexpected external events by restructuring solution strategies (Canas et al., 2006; Dennis & Vander Wal, 2010; Scott, 1962). When

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[1] Author translation

working with clients from different cultures, counselors are likely to encounter new and unexpected situations. In such a situation, it is emphasized that counselors should restructure their cognitions according to the new information coming from the culture of their clients (Barrott, 2014). On the other hand, it is emphasized that a counselor who is encapsulated in their own culture will evaluate from a narrow perspective, will not be able to adapt to the changes that occur in the counseling process, and will not be able to produce alternatives (Pedersen, 2000). In this context, it can be said that counselors should have the cognitive flexibility to be able to quickly process unexpected and new information about clients' cultures, adapt to the current situation, and follow an appropriate strategy while providing help to clients from different cultures. As a matter of fact, studies have shown that there is a significant positive relationship between cognitive flexibility and multicultural counseling competencies (Alan, 2020; Buyruk Genç, 2019; Martinez & Dong, 2020; Weide Shibl, 2010).

The Present Study

In the process of intercultural interaction, it can be said that the parties can authentically preserve their own cultural identities in a positive or negative relationship. Behavioral and cultural changes that occur as a result of the interaction of individuals from two different cultures are explained by the concept of acculturation (Berry, 2015). Acculturation has possible outcomes such as the dominant culture assimilating the other culture, the two sides excluding each other's culture, or maintaining their cultural identities in harmony with each other (Berry, 1974). Considering that authenticity refers to living a life in accordance with one's true self instead of external criteria without being hindered by the environment (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), it can be said that individuals can also remain authentic by excluding the culture of the other party as a result of acculturation. In such a situation, a person may not be influenced by their own culture because they consider it superior to the culture of the other party; therefore, they may authentically preserve their own cultural identity. On the other hand, in integration, which is a desirable and healthy outcome of acculturation, both parties maintain their cultural identities by establishing positive relationships with each other and being influenced by each other to a certain extent (Berry, 1974). Therefore, it can be said that an individual's authenticity can be seen in both positive and negative outcomes of acculturation. In this context, it is thought that although being authentic is a prerequisite for being culturally sensitive, it may not directly predict being culturally sensitive. Kottler (2017) states that being authentic enables counselors to act creatively, be open to new experiences, and exhibit flexible problem-solving skills. Therefore, it can be thought that authentic individuals may have cognitive flexibility in a way that they can get rid of the dominant cultural norms, stereotypes, and ways of thinking of the society they live in; thus, they may have a more culturally sensitive attitude.

It is stated that the way of thinking and perception are closely linked to culture. So much so that the individual perceives and makes sense of the world with the schemas brought from their own culture (Keller, 2020). Authenticity also seems to be closely linked to culture. Taylor (2003) argues that an individual's authenticity reflects the inner morality that guides them instead of social moral norms and allows them to be open to different meanings/values. Therefore, it can be said that a person with a high level of authenticity can exhibit the ability to stand out from the dominant cultural stereotypes and way of thinking of society. It is seen that there is a limited number of studies examining the relationship between authenticity and cognitive flexibility in the literature (Çeltekligil, 2021). On the other hand, some studies reveal a relationship between mindfulness as a dimension of authenticity and cognitive flexibility (Akyüz, 2020; Peker Akman & Demir, 2021) and some studies reveal relationships between authenticity and concepts that may be related to cognitive flexibility such as coping styles (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), problem-solving skills (Nas, 2020; Pullu, 2019; Tekin, 2021), creativity (Anbe, 2016; Pullu, 2019) and openness to experience (Xu, Xia, Zhao, & Pang 2021). From this point of view, it can be said that authenticity, which is shown among the characteristics that counselors who are role models for society (Kottler, 2017) should have (Corey, 2015), may be related to MCC perceptions through their cognitive flexibility.

Although being culturally sensitive in the counseling process is considered an ethical obligation (American Counseling Association, 2014; Şahin, 2018) and a professional value (Meydan & Arslan, 2021), it can be said

that there is a limited number of studies on MCC perceptions in Turkey. Also, it is thought that authenticity, which is an important professional characteristic for counselors, can play a key role in the context of multicultural counseling. It is emphasized that a significant number of counselors still exhibit low multicultural attitudes (Lüleci, 2014) and may lack knowledge and awareness about culture (Güçlücan, 2016). Considering the relationship between culture and thinking (Keller, 2020) and authenticity (Prince, 2003; Taylor, 2003), it is expected that authentic individuals can more easily break away from the dominant culture's ways of thinking. Therefore, it seems important to reveal the relationship between authenticity, which is seen as an important characteristic for counselors, and cognitive flexibility and MCC perceptions. It can be said that this importance increases even more for Turkey, which has a heterogeneous social structure due to hosting the lands where civilization first emerged and the sociological heritage it received from the Ottoman Empire. In this context, revealing the variables affecting counselors' perceptions of MCC will contribute to both researchers and practitioners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating role of cognitive flexibility levels in the relationship between counselors' authenticity levels and their perceptions of MCC. In this direction, an answer to the question "Do cognitive flexibility levels have a mediating role in the relationship between counselors' authenticity levels and their perceptions of MCC?" was sought. Within the framework of this problem, the following hypotheses were tested.

H1. The total effect of counselors' authenticity levels on their perceptions of MCC is significant. X → Y (c')

H2. The direct effect of counselors' authenticity levels on their cognitive flexibility levels is significant. X → M (a)

H3. The direct effect of counselors' cognitive flexibility levels on their perceptions of MCC is significant. M → Y (b)

H4. The indirect effect of counselors' authenticity levels on their perceptions of MCC through their cognitive flexibility levels is significant. X →M →Y (a.b)

Figure 1. Mediator effect of cognitive flexibility on the relationship between authenticity and MCC

A= Authenticity, CF= Cognitive Flexibility, MCC= Multicultural Counseling Competence
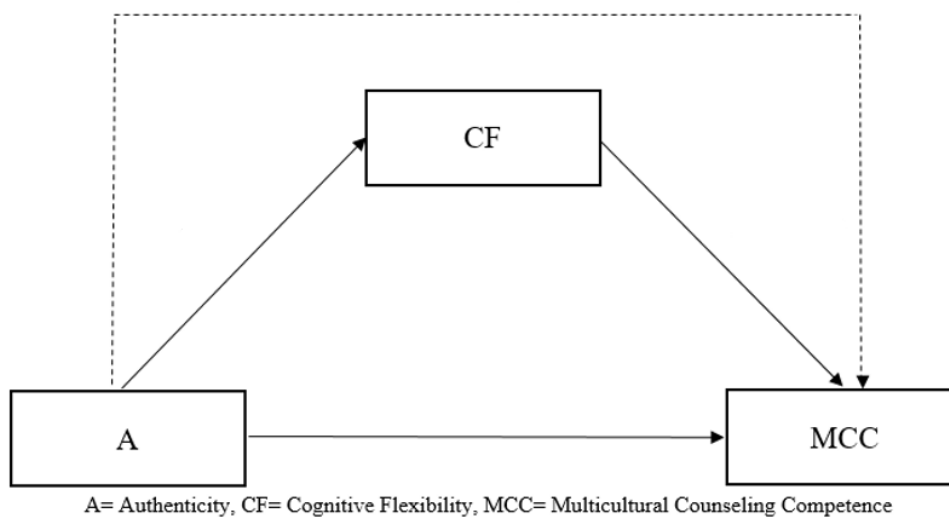
Methods and Materials

Research Design

The research is a descriptive study in the relational survey model aiming to examine the mediating role of cognitive flexibility levels in the relationship between counselors' authenticity levels and their perceptions of

MCC. In the simple mediation model, one variable causally affects another variable through a mediating variable (Hayes, 2018).

Study Group

The study group was determined by using the convenience sampling method. In the convenience sampling method, the study group is selected from easily accessible individuals because it provides convenience in terms of application (Creswell, 2014; Krippendorff, 2004). The study group consists of 562 psychological counselors who are actively working in different institutions, mainly in public schools in various cities of Turkey, and 55 psychological counselors who are not working, for a total of 617 psychological counselors. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics about the study group.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		N	%
Gender	Female	493	79.9
	Male	124	20.1
Education Level	Undergraduate	450	72.9
	Graduate	165	26.7
Place of Employment	Public Primary School	132	21.4
	Public Secondary School	124	20.1
	Public High School	111	18
	Private Primary School	29	4.7
	Private Secondary School	14	2.3
	Private High School	32	5.2
	Guidance and Research Center	29	4.7
	University Guidance and Psychological Counseling Services Unit	9	1.5
	Private Psychological Counseling Center	11	1.8
	Other	62	10
	Unemployed	55	8.9
Professional Experience	0-5 years	304	49.3
	6-11 years	120	19.4
	12-17 years	38	6.2
	18 years and above	155	25.1

Table 1 shows that 493 (79.9%) of the participants were female and 124 (20.1%) were male. Of the participants, 450 (72.9%) had undergraduate and 165 (26.7%) had graduate degrees. Of the participants with postgraduate education, 149 (24.1%) had a master's degree and 16 (2.1%) had a doctoral degree. Considering distribution of the participants according to the institutions they work in, 132 (21.4%) of them work in public primary schools, 124 (20.1%) in public secondary schools, 111 (18%) in public high schools, 29 (4.7%) in private primary schools, 14 (2.3%) in private secondary schools, 32 (5. 2%) in private high schools, 29 (4.7%) in Guidance and Research Centers, 9 (1.5%) in Guidance and Psychological Counseling Services Units of Universities, 11 (1.8%) in Private Psychological Counseling Centers and 62 (10%) in other institutions. 55 participants (8.9%) are not currently employed. When evaluated according to their professional experience, it is seen that 304 (49.3%) of the participants have 0-5 years of professional experience, 120 (19.4%) have 6-11 years of professional experience, 38 (6.2%) have 12-17 years of professional experience and 155 (25.1%) have 18 years or more of professional experience.

Data Collection Tools

Four different data collection tools were used in the study: Personal Information Form, Authenticity Scale, Multicultural Counseling Competencies Scale, and Cognitive Flexibility Inventory.

Personal Information Form. This form was prepared by the researchers and designed to obtain information about the descriptive characteristics of the study group. In the Personal Information Form, questions were included to collect data on personal and professional information such as the participants' gender, professional experience, the city where they work, and the type of institution they work in.

Authenticity Scale. The scale developed by Wood et al. (2008) was adapted into Turkish by İlhan and Özdemir (2013). The scale has a 7-point Likert-type structure consisting of 12 items. The scale has 3 sub-dimensions consisting of 4 items each as "Self-Alienation", "Authentic Living" and "Accepting External Influence". As it is possible to handle the scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale separately from each other, the pure authenticity scores of the participants can be obtained by subtracting the sum of the scores of the other two sub-dimensions from the scores obtained from the authentic life sub-dimension. The scoring of each sub-dimension varies between 4 and 28. A minimum score of 12 and a maximum score of 84 can be obtained from the whole scale. For this study, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .70 for the whole scale, .79 for self-alienation, .86 for accepting external influence, and .66 for authentic living.

Multicultural Counseling Competencies Scale. The scale developed by Özer (2014) is a 5-point Likert type and consists of 26 items. The scale has three sub-dimensions: awareness, knowledge, and skills. There are 9 items in the awareness dimension, 6 items in the knowledge dimension, and 11 items in the skills dimension. The scores obtained from the measurement tool vary between 26 and 130. A high score indicates high and a low score indicates low MCC (Özer, 2014). Based on the data collected in this study, Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .77 for awareness, .88 for knowledge, .84 for skills, and .87 for the whole scale.

Cognitive Flexibility Inventory. The inventory developed by Dennis and Vander Wal in 2010 was adapted into Turkish by Sapmaz and Doğan (2013). The original form of the inventory was a 7-point Likert-type scale and the Turkish adaptation of the inventory was a 5-point Likert-type scale. The measurement tool consists of 20 items. The inventory has two dimensions: "Alternatives" and "Control". The "Alternatives" dimension consists of 13 items and the "Control" dimension consists of 7 items. Higher scores indicate a higher cognitive flexibility level of the individual. Based on the data of this study, Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .87 for the control dimension, .92 for the alternatives dimension, and .92 for the whole inventory.

Data Collection and Ethical Process

The data were collected over a period of approximately 2 months covering January and February in the 2021-2022 academic year. Before collecting the data, permission was obtained via e-mail from the faculty members who adapted or developed the measurement tools used in the current study. Then, ethical and implementation permissions were obtained from Gazi University Ethics Commission and the Ministry of National Education Strategy Development Presidency, respectively. In the implementation phase, data were collected using three measurement tools and a personal information form within the framework of the research topic. Data were collected face-to-face with paper and pencil tests and online with Google Forms. Participants were informed verbally or in writing about voluntariness and confidentiality of personal information before answering the data collection tools.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 25 package program. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the relationships between variables. PROCESS Macro Model 4 was used to examine the mediating role of cognitive flexibility levels in the relationship between counselors' authenticity levels and their perceptions of MCC.

Although there are different opinions in the literature, it is recommended that the number of missing data in a data set should not exceed 5% (Kline, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2015). In this study, the data of the participants whose number of blank items exceeded 5% were not included in the analysis. Before starting the data analysis, blank items were assigned a valueas the series average. Within the scope of the preliminary analysis of the data, extreme values were determined and removed from the data set. It is seen that there is more than one method used in this regard. Outliers can be identified by Mahalanobis Distance, Cook's distance values greater than 1, values with z scores not within ±3, and box plot analysis (Field, 2009; Kline, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2015). Using these methods, 8 outliers were identified and removed from the data set. It is seen that the skewness and kurtosis values of the variables in the study are within the range of ±1. It is stated that skewness and kurtosis coefficients in the range of ±1 are ideal values for normal distribution (Darren &

Mallery, 2001). In this respect, it can be said that normal distribution was achieved in this study in terms of these critical values and criterias.

Before conducting the simple mediation analysis, it was tested whether the variables in the study meet the basic assumptions of the simple mediation model. First of all, it is stated that there should be a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, the independent variable and the mediator variable, and the mediator variable and the dependent variable (Hayes, 2018). In addition, when the mediator variable is included in the equation, it should change the strength or existence of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. If the relationship between the independent and dependent variables becomes insignificant after the mediator variable is added to the model, it assumes a full mediation role, and if the relationship does not become insignificant but its strength changes significantly, it assumes a partial mediation role (Hayes, 2018). Within the scope of the research, the above assumptions were tested before conducting the simple mediation analysis and it was determined that the data met the assumptions.

Bootstrapping analysis, which is defined as a process that increases the reliability of the mediation model as a result of replicating the original data as a sample through imitation, states that the number of resampling should be at least 5000 (Hayes, 2009). Therefore, the data related to the simple mediation model in the study were analyzed with 5000 bootstrapping samples and their significance was evaluated based on a 95% confidence interval.

Findings

Figure 2. The mediating role of cognitive flexibility levels in the relationship between counselors' authenticity levels and their perceptions of multicultural counseling competence
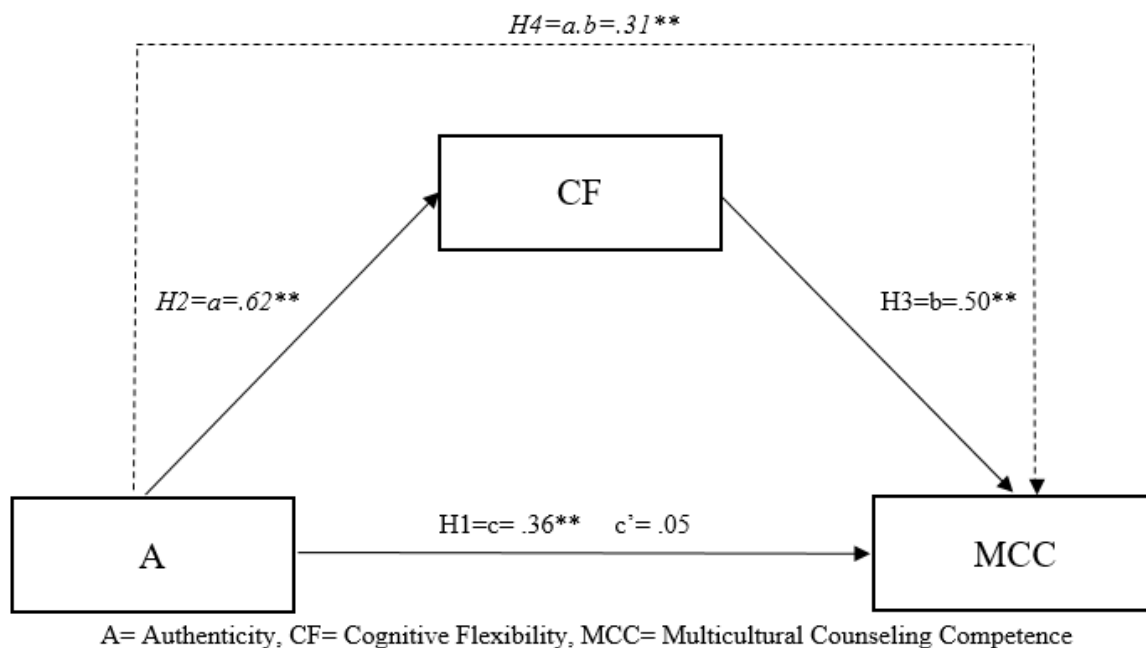

A= Authenticity, CF= Cognitive Flexibility, MCC= Multicultural Counseling Competence

Figure 1 shows that the direct effect of counselors' authenticity levels on their cognitive flexibility levels is significant (β=.62, p < .001, CI= Lowest=.55, Highest=.67). In addition, the direct effect of counselors' cognitive flexibility levels on their MCC perceptions was found to be significant (β=.50, p < .001, CI= Lowest=.52, Highest=.74). The total effect of counselors' level of authenticity on their perceptions of MCC was found to be significant (β=.36, p < .001, CI= Lowest=.35, Highest=.54). On the other hand, the direct effect of counselors' authenticity levels on their MCC perceptions was insignificant (β=.05, p >.05, CI= Lowest= -.04, Highest=.17), whereas the indirect effect was significant (β=.31, p < .001, CI= Lowest=.26,

Highest=.37). In light of these findings, it can be said that counselors' cognitive flexibility levels played a full mediating role in the relationship between their levels of authenticity and their perceptions of MCC.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, the total effect of counselors' authenticity levels on their perceptions of MCC was found to be significant, while the direct effect was found to be insignificant. Instead, the indirect effect of counselors' authenticity levels on their perceptions of MCC through their cognitive flexibility levels was found to be significant.

Based on the findings, it can be said that being authentic is an important prerequisite for counselors' MCC perceptions; however, it is not sufficient alone. Prince (2003) found that therapists' inauthenticity negatively predicted their multicultural counseling competencies. On the other hand, this result does not mean that being authentic directly predicts multicultural counseling competencies. It seems to be an expected result that an individual who is trapped in their own culture is not sensitive to different cultures. On the other hand, the differentiation of an authentic individual from the dominant culture may not make that person culturally sensitive. As a matter of fact, it is stated that communication between individuals from two different cultures has possible consequences such as discrimination, where the dominant culture excludes the minority group, or marginality, where both cultures preserve their identities without interacting (Berry, 1974; 2008; 2015). In these negative consequences, it can be said that both sides authentically preserve their own cultures without being influenced by the other side's culture. However, it can be considered that this is not enough for a culturally sensitive attitude.

Counselors' cognitive flexibility levels were found to be an important component in the relationship between their authenticity levels and their perceptions of MCC. It is stated that culture affects the way of thinking and perception (Keller, 2020), and authenticity is related to an individual's inner morality and openness to different values (Taylor, 2003). Although studies examining the relationship between authenticity and cognitive flexibility are limited in the literature, it is seen that concepts closely related to these variables have been investigated. It is seen that mindfulness, which is accepted as a component of authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), is associated with cognitive flexibility (Akyüz, 2020) and has a predictive role in cognitive flexibility (Peker Akman & Demir, 2021). In addition, there are findings in the literature that authenticity is related to a number of concepts related to cognitive flexibility such as problem-solving skills (Nas, 2020; Pullu, 2019; Tekin, 2021), coping styles (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), creativity (Anbe, 2016; Pullu, 2019) and openness to experience (Xu et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be said that the findings of this study are consistent with the literature.

In this study, it was seen that counselors' cognitive flexibility levels directly predicted their perceptions of MCC. In the literature, some studies reveal a positive relationship between MCC and cognitive flexibility levels (Alan, 2020; Weide Shibl, 2010). In addition, Martinez and Dong (2020) found that cognitive flexibility as well as cognitive rigidity had a predictive role on MCC. In addition, it is seen that variables such as openness to experience and intolerance of uncertainty are related to cognitive flexibility (Güvenç, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that the findings obtained in the study are consistent with the literature. In light of all this information, considering that providing counseling to clients from different cultures implies new situations and uncertainty, counselors' high levels of cognitive flexibility are important in terms of their perceptions of MCC.

The results of this research provide important contributions to understanding the relationships between authenticity, cognitive flexibility and multicultural counseling skills of psychological counselors. It was found that psychological counselors' multicultural counseling competencies could be increased indirectly by increasing their authenticity levels. The increase in counselors' authenticity levels will increase their cognitive flexibility levels; therefore, their perceptions of MCC can also increase. In other words, since authentic psychological counselors can get rid of the dominant cultural norms and stereotypes, they can be more cognitively flexible and thus have a higher perception of MCC. In a nut shell, authentic counselors can increase the quality of their services with their cognitive flexibility in the multicultural counseling process.

Recommendations

Difference methods can be used within the scope of measurement in future studies. First, within the scope of this study, the simple mediation model is based on the total scores of the variables. In future studies, the issue can be addressed more comprehensively by including the sub-dimensions of the variables in the model. Second, although authenticity, which is the independent variable of this study, is a characteristic that psychological counselors should possess, it is seen that this concept has not been studied much in the field of Guidance and Psychological Counseling and has been studied in different fields such as philosophy and fine arts. It can be said that authenticity has different meanings for psychological counselors than its use in other fields. Therefore, it may be important to conduct more studies on the authenticity level of psychological counselors and to examine its reflections in the counseling process to fill this gap in the field. Also, it may be useful to develop a measurement tool that measures the authenticity levels of counselors in the counseling process.

Psychoeducational programs can be developed and implemented to increase the level of authenticity and thus the level of cognitive flexibility of counselors and counselor candidates to improve their perceptions of MCC. In addition, through theoretical and practical courses at undergraduate and graduate education levels, in-service training such as seminars and classes to be organized for professional staff, counselors' authenticity levels can be improved and they can be made more cognitively flexible; thus, their perceptions of MCC can be increased. Also, in the "Psychological Counseling Skills" course taught in Guidance and Psychological Counseling undergraduate programs of universities, activities related to cognitive flexibility can be included to increase students' perceptions of MCC. In these activities, methods such as discussion and case studies can be used to focus on the development of creativity, problem-solving, and coping skills related to cognitive flexibility.

Limitations

The majority of the study group consisted of school counselors working in public schools. In this context, psychological counselors working in counseling centers could have been studied. Another limitation of the study is that the study group was selected by convenient sampling method. A more heterogeneous study group could have been used with random sampling. Also, the dimensions of the MCC scale were not included in the analysis. The relationships of awareness, knowledge and skills dimensions with authenticity and cognitive flexibility could have been examined.

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