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Research Paper

The Effect of Field Practice Course on Respect of Differences Level of Psychological Counselor Candidates

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of the practices in Field Practice course which psychological counselor candidates took on final semester of undergraduate education on their respect of difference level and a mixed research model was employed in this study. The one-group pretest-posttest model which is a type of quasi-experimental designs was used in the quantitative dimension of the study and the experimental group was composed of 40 psychological counselor candidates. The Respect of Difference Scale and a Form of Opinions about Field Practice were used to collect the data. A paired sample t-test was used to evaluate the mean difference between the pretest which was applied before taking the Field Practice course and posttest which was applied after taking the Field Practice course mean respect of difference scores of participants. Results indicated that respect of difference levels of psychological counselor candidates significantly increased after taking the course. According to the findings obtained from the opinions of the participants, it was found that the number of types of diversity and the number of diversity-oriented activities are limited at schools with no counselor and schools from low socio economic areas.

Keywords: Respect of difference, field practice, multicultural counseling, psychological counselor, diversity

Psikolojik Danışman Adaylarının Farklılıklara Saygı Düzeylerine

Alan Çalışmasının Etkisi

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada psikolojik danışman adaylarının lisans eğitimlerinin son döneminde aldıkları Alan Çalışması dersi kapsamında yaptıkları uygulamaların farklılıklara saygı düzeylerine etkisi incelenmiştir. Karma araştırma modeliyle yürütülen araştırmanın nicel boyutunda yarı deneysel desenlerden tek grup ön test–son test modeli kullanılmış ve 40 psikolojik danışman adayı araştırmanın deney grubunu oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada Farklılıklara Saygı Ölçeği ve Alan Çalışması Görüş Formu aracılığıyla veriler toplanmıştır. Psikolojik danışman adaylarının farklılıklara saygı düzeylerinin “Alan Çalışması” dersi öncesi ve sonrasında farklılaşp farklılaşmadığını belirlemek için “İlişkili Örneklemeler için t testi” uygulanmış ve PDR son sınıf öğrencilerinin Alan Çalışması sonrasında farklılıklara saygı düzeylerinin anlamlı ölçüde arttığı ortaya konmuştur. Alan Çalışması dersi kapsamında yaptıkları çalışmalar hakkında bilgi almaya yönelik yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen nitel veriler ise betimsel analiz tekniği kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Psikolojik danışman adaylarının görüşlerinden elde edilen bulgulara göre, psikolojik danışmanı olmayan ve alt sosyo-ekonomik düzeydeki okullarda alan çalışmasının yürütülmesi nedeniyle karşılaştıkları farklılık türlerinin az olduğu ve farklılıklara saygıya yönelik çalışmaların sınırlı kaldığı görülmüştür. Elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik lisans eğitimi müfredatına ve uygulamalı derslere yönelik bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Farklılıklara saygı, alan çalışması, çok kültürlü danışma, psikolojik danışman, çeşitlilik.

INTRODUCTION

Today, individual differences in educational environments and attitudes of educators' toward these differences have become a current issue. Students are different in terms of their strengths, weaknesses, interests, development and life circumstances. The differences between the students are now considered as richness, not as threats to integrity. Individual differences should be taken into consideration in order to enable all students to live in harmony, to provide them with a better learning environment and to support their personal development.

Differences involve several constructs such as age, gender, demographic structure, ethnic or geographic background, identity, educational status, family status, experiences, beliefs, values, political perspective, work experience, physical competence, personality and lifestyle (Foxman & Easterling, 1999). These differences are classified as information based differences, social category differences and value differences. Information-based differences such as educational status and work experience are the differences based on the knowledge and perspective of individuals within the group. Social category differences include differences as race, gender, and ethnicity. Value differences are the differences that emerge when the group's goals the group's goals are different from their aims and mission (Jehn, Nortcraft & Neale, 1999). Respect of differences is not a positive or negative attitude towards an individual's actions or behaviors but rather it is accepting the differences as a natural process, not attributing them to the individual and respecting the individual differences (Güven, 2012).

Respect for differences in educational environments is no longer an option and has become a necessity. The easiest way to achieve this is to assimilate the concept of multiculturalism (Ferguson, 2008). Multiculturalism is being aware of language, religion, race, gender, age, social class, ethnicity, disability and other cultural values (APA, 2003). A multicultural life which includes this awareness requires different characteristics to live together under equal conditions (Özben, 1991). The first social environment in which individuals face these different features is the school environment (Dilmen & Oğut, 2010). The multicultural education environment offers equal educational opportunities for all students from different races, ethnicities and social groups and improves communication between different groups of students (Çirik, 2008). Various negative experiences (Rengi & Polat, 2014) and conflicts (Özmen & Akuzum, 2010) may arise due to these differences in the school environment where teachers and students with different cultural backgrounds interact. Therefore, it is important to develop a multicultural understanding in which differences are taken into consideration in educational environments and the most important task falls to the teacher to develop this understanding (Polat, 2009). Because teachers' being sensitive and respectful to differences in the classroom is an effective way of solving conflicts and preventing potential problems (Rengi & Polat, 2014). In addition, teachers' accepting and respecting attitudes towards students with differences may be a role model for peers.

The perceptions and attitudes of school counselors (as well as teachers) towards the students with different ethnic backgrounds, language, religion, sexual orientation, and cultural characteristics

affect the students' school life and social quality of life (Vural-Batik, 2019). Psychological counselors' sensitivity to differences, acceptance and understanding different students as they are and support to these students have a positive impact on the presence of students in the classroom. In addition, the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) ethical principles require that psychological counselors should be aware of different groups and should be sensitive to their needs. In this context, respect of differences level of psychological counselors should be high in order to provide effective psychological counseling services to students with different characteristics and be a role model for their peers.

Multicultural counseling which points out the necessity that psychological counselors should be sensitive to the different characteristics of individuals and should use techniques that are suitable to client's cultural background in the counseling process, also makes clear the importance of competencies that a counselor should have. It is questioned whether psychological counselors who are influenced by various prejudices towards cultural differences can effectively conduct the psychological counseling process. Hence, even if a psychological counselor has enough knowledge about cultural sensitivity, empathy, and unconditional acceptance, he\she may has difficulty in using this knowledge while counseling clients with different backgrounds and may be affected by their own cultural background. In order to avoid this risk, it has been proposed to gain psychological counselors competencies of multicultural counseling which includes being aware of own values and prejudices, includes understanding the worldviews of clients with different cultural backgrounds, and applying different intervention methods during the undergraduate education (Kagnici, 2013).

It is observed that multicultural counseling competencies gained through various models, including the separate course model, the integration model and the areas of concentration model. In the separate course model which is the one most commonly used, separate courses are added to a program's training curriculum to promote multicultural counseling competencies. The integration model necessitates the integration of multicultural counseling competencies into the entire body of curriculum offered by a training program and approaches multicultural context as a basic element of the training program. The areas of concentration model comprise various courses taught in the counselor education program and usually integrates an applied experience in different cultural settings (Chae, Foley & Chae, 2006). Several methods are used in courses to gain multicultural counseling competencies. Although experiential learning (Villalba & Remond, 2008), experiential play (Hosftede & Pedersen, 1999) and cultural immersion (Ridley, Mendoza & Kanitz, 1994) are effective methods, it is not possible to gain multicultural counseling competencies only through the courses. Therefore, it is stated that psychological counselor candidates should make practice and should have applied experience to gain competencies skills (Kagnici, 2013). Psychological counselor candidates practice in different settings as a part of the Field Practice course which is offered in Guidance and Psychological Counseling undergraduate program. Particularly, it is seen that psychological counseling candidates use the cultural immersion method frequently when they practice in educational settings which have students with different cultural backgrounds. Thanks to these practices, it is possible to improve respect of differences levels and multicultural counseling competency levels of psychological counselor candidates. Therefore, this study was carried out

to investigate the effect of the practices in Field Practice course which psychological counselor candidates took on the final semester of undergraduate education on their respect of difference level. In this direction, answer to the following questions were sought:

1. Does the Field Practice course have an effect on the level of respect of differences of psychological counselor candidates?
2. Do the levels of respect for differences of psychological counselor candidates differ significantly according to gender?
3. What are the opinions of the counselors about the Field Practice course?

METHOD

Research Model

This study, which examined the effect of the Field Practice course on psychological counselor candidates' respect of difference level, was conducted with mixed research design and quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the current study. Mixed researches systematically combine the ideas of both qualitative and quantitative research to answer questions about the subject to be investigated (Buyukozturk, Kilic-Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2012).

“Determining the opinions of the psychological counselor candidates about the Field Practice course” constitutes the qualitative dimension of the study. Qualitative research is the type of research in which findings derive from real-world settings, obtain from participant directly and can be verbally expressed (Buyukozturk vd., 2012). This research was carried out as a case study as a type of qualitative research. The case study is an in-depth examination of a current phenomenon, event, condition, and groups (Yin, 1994).

“Examining the effect of the Field Practice course on the respect of differences level of psychological counselor candidates” constitutes the quantitative dimension of the study. Quantitative research is the type of research where primarily numerical methods are used to collect the data from a sample that represents the universe and statistical procedures are used for data analysis (Buyukozturk vd., 2012). In this regard, the one-group pretest-posttest model which is a type of quasi-experimental designs was used in this study. The quasi-experimental design is the most commonly used experimental design in educational researches, especially when it is not possible to check all variables (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2000).

After obtaining the approval of the ethics committee of the Ethics Committee of Social Sciences and Humanities, the Respect of Differences Scale was administered as a pretest to participating psychological counselor candidates. Then the participants took the Field Practice course for 10 weeks. The Field Practice course, which is a total of 4 credits per week, 2 hours of theoretical work and 2 hours of practical work, aims to enable students to develop a perspective on the problems they encountered and needs in the field and to develop solutions to problems and needs. In this respect, psychological counselor candidates practice in schools or other educational settings. At the end of the semester, the scale was administered again as a posttest. The independent variable of the study was the Field Practice course and the dependent variable was the level of respect for the differences measured by the Respect of Differences Scale.

Study Group

The study group consisted of 40 last year students who were studying at the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling of a state university and who took the Field Practice course in the spring term of the 2017-2018 academic year. The mean age of the study group was 22.3 ($S_s = .82$) and of the participants 60% ($n=24$) were female and 40% ($n=16$) were male.

Data Collection Tools

In the current study quantitative data was collected through Respect of Differences Scale and the qualitative data was collected via Field Practice Opinion Form.

The respect of differences scale (RDS). The Respect of Differences Scale (RDS) was developed by Oksuz and Guven (2012) in order to determine respect for differences levels of individuals. The scale consists of 30 items with five alternative responses. Higher scores indicate an increased level of respect for difference. The scale has three subscales (knowledge-based differences, social category differences, value differences) and these three factors accounted for 59.25 % of the total variance. The item test correlations of the scale vary between 0.30 and 0.83. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the total scale was found as 0.94 and concurrent validity of the scale was calculated as .70. In a study conducted by Vural-Batik (2019), the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .78.

Field practice opinion form. The form which was prepared by the researcher includes question to obtain information about the practices of psychological counselor candidates within the scope of Field Practice course such as type of the school, the differences between students that they met, the practices that they design and implement for these students with differences and the changes in their opinions and attitudes towards differences.

Analyze of Data

In this study, mixed research model including both quantitative and qualitative design has been used. In the analysis of quantitative data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was applied to determine whether the data were distributed normally or not. If the sample size is greater than 35, it is recommended to use the K-S test (McKillup, 2012). The results of the K-S test revealed that the p-value for the pre-test the Respect of Differences Scale scores was .20 ($p > .05$). If the p-value is greater than .05, then it can be said that the data has a normal distribution (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). However, it is stated that the distribution is affected by the sample size in the K-S test and the K-S test should be used with descriptive methods (Sprenst & Smeeton, 2007). The calculation of the kurtosis and skewness coefficients in the distribution of data is defined as descriptive methods (Abbott, 2011). If the Kurtosis and Skewness are between -1 and +1, it is considered that the assumption of normal distribution is acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In this study, the kurtosis and skewness values of the pretest scores were .764, and .104 respectively. According to these findings, it was determined that the data were normally distributed and parametric tests were used to analyze the data.

A paired sample t-test was conducted to analyze the differences between the mean respect of differences between pretest and posttest scores. The independent sample t-test was applied in order to determine whether the levels of respect of differences of participants differ according to gender. The data were analyzed by using SPSS 21.00 package program. The significance was tested at .05 level.

Qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The data obtained from the descriptive statistics are summarized and interpreted according to the previously determined themes, and the raw data is organized in a way that is meaningful (Yildirim & Simsek, 2005). In this respect, the data obtained from the participants were summarized as thematic categories and shared with an expert and inter-encoder reliability was examined. The results of the reliability study demonstrated that all themes are reliable because the coding of each theme showed a value greater than 0.80. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that agreements between researchers must be at least 70% according to the inter-encoder reliability calculation. The answers of the psychological counselor candidates were examined and discussed the agreements, difference and opinions and the possible conflicts by another researcher. Finally, the findings are organized and interpreted according to the themes.

FINDINGS

The results of paired sample t-test which was conducted to see whether there was a significant difference between the mean respect of differences scores of psychological counselor candidates before they took the Field Practice course and after they took the course were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Paired Sample T- Test Results of Psychological Counselor Candidates

RDS	n	Mean	Sd	Df	r	t	p
Pre-test	40	74.22	8.21	39	-.269	-21.471	.000*
Post-test	40	126.40	10.96				

*p<.001

As it can be seen in Table 1, it was determined that there was a significant difference between the mean pre-test and posttest respect of differences scores of psychological counselors candidates ($p<.001$). As In other words, it has been shown that the respect of differences level of participants who were senior guidance and psychological counseling students has significantly increased after they took the Field Practice course ($t(39) = -21.471, p<.001$). While the pretest mean respect of differences score of participants was 74.22 ($Sd=8.21$), the posttest mean respect of differences score was 126.40 ($Sd=10.96$). This finding indicated that the Field Practice course has an important role in increasing the respect of difference level of psychological counselor candidates.

In addition, a Cohen's d (effect size) was used as an effect size analysis and it was found as $r = .93$. If the Cohen's d value is between 0-.20 this would be considered a small effect; if it is between .21 and .50 this would be considered a moderate effect and if it is larger than .50 this would

be considered a large effect (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, the Field Practice course seems to have a large effect in changing respect of differences levels of psychological counselor candidates.

The results of independent sample t-test which was conducted to determine whether the level of respect of differences of participants differ according to their gender were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Independent Sample T-Test Results of Posttest Respect of Difference Scores by

Gender	n	Mean	Sd	Df	t	p
Female	24	125.66	11.40	38	-.513	.611
Male	16	127.50	10.53			

As it can be seen in Table 2, the mean posttest respect of difference scores of participants didn't differ significantly according to their gender ($t(38) = -.513, p > .05$).

Opinions of Psychological Counselor Candidates about Field Practice

The frequencies and percentages of responses of psychological counselor candidates about the Field Practice were presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Opinions of Psychological Counselor Candidates About Field Practice

Questions	Responses	f	%
In which school did you make Field Practice?	Preschool (medium SES)	14	35
	Primary School (low SES)	19	47,5
	Middle School (low SES)	7	17,5
What kind of differences did you meet in school which you make Field Practice?	Socio-economic	23	57,5
	Cultural	7	17,5
	Ethnicity	6	15
	Special needs	6	15
	I didn't meet.	13	32,5
What kind of practices did you design and implement for students with differences in school which you make Field Practice?	Group counseling	8	20
	Preventing peer bullying	6	15
	Friendship education	3	7,5
	Inclusion	3	7,5
	Value education	2	5
	I didn't design.	20	50
What kind of practices has been done for students with differences in school which you make Field Practice? Did you observe?	Inclusion and adjustment	8	20
	Financial aid	2	5
	Referral to social activities	1	2,5
	Individual guidance	1	2,5
	Value education	1	2,5
	No practice has been done.	28	70

Did your opinions toward students with differences change after the Field Practice?	I became more empathetic and accepting	27	67,5
	They didn't change	13	32,5

As seen in Table 3, all of the psychological counselor candidates have made their practices in schools from low socio-economic communities. Of the participants 35% have made practices in independent preschools, 47.5% have made practices in primary school in a village and 17.5% have made practices in secondary school in a village. 32.5% of the participants stated that they did not encounter students with differences in the practices; 57,5% of them encountered students with socio-economic disadvantages, 17,5% of them encountered students with cultural differences, 15% of them encountered students with ethnic minority backgrounds and 15% of them encountered students with developmental differences. In the field practices, while 50% of the psychological counselor candidates did not design and implement any activities for students with differences, 20% of them designed a group counseling intervention, 15% of them implemented activities to prevent peer bullying, 7.5% of them developed a friendship education program, 7.5% of them provided inclusion activities and 5% of them made activities about value education. 70% of the participants reported that any studies or activities have been provided for students with differences in schools which they made practices. 20% of them reported that inclusion and adjustment programs have been implemented in schools for students with special needs, 5% of them stated that financial aid was provided for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 2.5% of them stated that students with differences were referred to social activities, 2.5% of them reported that individual guidance has been provided for students with differences and 2.5% of them reported that value education programs were implemented for these students. 67.5% of the psychological counselor candidates reported positive changes in their opinions towards students with differences after they took the Field Practice course. They also stated that they get more empathetic and acceptable. 32.5% of them stated that their opinions did not change because they did not provide any study or practice for students with differences.

According to the findings obtained from the opinions of the psychological counselor candidates, it was found that the number of types of diversity and the number of diversity-oriented activities are limited at schools with no counselor and schools from low socio-economic areas. In addition, psychological counselor candidates reported that schools provide activities for students with differences but studies or activities for the acceptance of students with differences.

DISCUSSION

Respect to differences which refers having respect for an individual without taking the differences into consideration and just because he/she is a human (Güven, 2012), is an important factor to support self-esteem (Laegaard, 2008). In this respect, it is important for psychological counselors to have respect for students in differences. In this study, the effect of the Field Practice course on psychological counselor candidates' respect of difference level was investigated. Results of the study indicated that the practices in Field Practice course which psychological counselor candidates

took on the final semester of undergraduate education have a significant positive impact on their respect of differences level.

When the previous studies on the respect of differences are examined, it can be seen that while some of them focused on the education of respect to differences given to students (Dilmac, Kulaksizoglu & Eksi, 2007; Ekmisoglu, 2007; Uner, 2011), the others focused on determining the opinions of teachers about cultural differences (Akar-Vural & Gomleksiz, 2010; Coban, Karaman ve Dogan, 2010; Pekdogan, 2018; Rengi & Polat, 2014; Unlu & Orten, 2013). In a study which was conducted to determine the respect for differences level of psychological counselor candidates, it was found that psychological counselor candidates have tended to exhibit the high level of respect of differences however, it was noteworthy that first graders reported a higher level of respect of differences than fourth-graders (Vural-Batik, 2019). Although it is expected that the discriminatory attitudes of the counseling will decrease during the undergraduate education period, due to the multicultural counseling competencies don't take part in undergraduate program adequately, they may perceive multiculturalism as discriminative and detrimental and may exhibit negative attitudes towards differences. Considering that the most important task in the formation of an educational environment that respects differences and reflects cultural diversity falls on the educators and school counselors (Derman-Sparks, 2010), it is important to support the level of respect of differences of the psychological counselors during the undergraduate education. It can be said that multicultural psychological counseling competencies should be gained in order to improve respect of differences.

The competencies of multicultural counseling are formed in a combination of awareness, knowledge, and skills. In this regard, counselors need to be aware of their own cultural assumptions, have knowledge of cultural diversity and acquire culturally sensitive intervention skills (Sue & Sue, 2013). If psychological counselors are focused on acquiring knowledge and skills without gaining sufficient awareness, they may experience difficulties in helping a client with different characteristics (Yoon, Jérémie-Brink & Kathleen- Kordesh, 2014), and they may have difficulties in applying skills such as unconditional acceptance, respect, and empathy which they acquired during the undergraduate program. For this reason, it is important that multicultural counseling competencies should take place in psychological counseling training (Kagnici, 2013) and there are many studies that proved that various courses including multicultural counseling skills in undergraduate education are effective in gaining knowledge and skills that may be helpful for psychological counselor candidates to work with clients from different communities (Bemak & Chung, 2004; Cates, Schaeffe, Smaby, Maddux & LeBeauf, 2007; Cornelius-White, 2005; Estrada & Rigali-Oiler, 2016; Kagnici, 2011, 2014; McCreary & Walker, 2001).

The results of the current study indicated that the respect of difference level of psychological counselor candidates significantly increased after the Field Practice course which they took on the final semester of undergraduate education. Within the scope of the Field Practice course, it can be said that multicultural counseling competencies have been tried to gain through the areas of concentration model and cultural immersion method is used in the course. According to Canfield, Low and Hovestadt (2011), cultural immersion method enables psychological counselor candidates to

spend some time together with people with different cultural characteristics, have the opportunity to understand them, develop understanding, respect and empathy. In this context, it is thought that in this research cultural immersion is the most important factor in increasing the level of respect of differences of participants. However, opinions of the psychological counselor candidates showed that the number of types of diversity and the number of diversity-oriented activities are limited at schools with no counselor and schools from low socio-economic areas. In addition, psychological counselor candidates reported that schools provide activities for students with differences but studies or activities for the acceptance of students with differences. It is noteworthy that although approximately one-third of the participants stated that they did not encounter students with differences in their practices, they did not design and implement any activities for students with differences and their opinions did not change, their respect of difference level has been increased. For this reason, some arrangements can be made to improve respect for differences.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In order to increase the level of respect for the differences that are thought to affect the professional competencies of the counselors significantly, it is recommended that the multicultural psychological counseling competencies should take part in various courses in undergraduate education to raise the awareness, knowledge, and skills related to the differences. In addition, it can be suggested to provide psychological counselor candidates the opportunity to practice in the environments where there are individuals with cultural differences, to choose the schools in Field Practice course where students with differences enroll, to guide the counselors to use their multicultural counseling competencies and to provide them adequate supervision.

In this study, only the experimental group was formed due to the fact that all of the fourth graders took the Field Practice course. Lack of control group is one of the limitations of this study. Another limitation of the research is that this sample was composed of participants who were all counseling students in a state university. Further studies can be conducted in larger cities which have more cultural diversity and with a more heterogeneous group. The effect of the courses which include multicultural counseling practices on the respect of difference level of psychological counselor candidates may be examined. In addition, the level of respect for differences of psychological counselors working in the field can be investigated, intervention programs can be developed and the effect of these programs can be examined.

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