School Psychological Counselors' Opinions about Colleague Solidarity Group Process: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the opinions of school psychological counselors regarding the colleague solidarity group process carried out by Amasya Guidance and Research Center. The study group of this qualitative research study consists of 19 school psychological counselors working at various educational levels in Amasya province. The study group was selected by purposeful sampling method. A personal information form prepared for school psychological counselors and a semi-structured interview form consisting of 5 open-ended questions were used to collect data. Content analysis method was used to analyze the data. As a result, 4 themes and 10 sub-themes were obtained. Research results showed that the collegiate group process had positive personal and professional effects on school counselors. At the end of this process, it was observed that the participants developed different ways of coping with the challenging cases they encountered or may encounter in their professional lives. In addition, it was observed that they frequently shared their feelings and experiences while working with these challenging cases with their colleagues. In this context, peer solidarity groups are thought to be an effective and functional method that can be used to cope with the problems in the professional lives of school psychological counselors.

Keywords: Colleague solidarity groups, school psychological counselor, qualitative research

Introduction

Colleague solidarity is expressed with the concept of peer supervision in international studies. Mcleod (2003) defines peer supervision as counselors providing supervision to each other without a specific leader or supervisor. The concept of collegiality used in this study is used in the same sense as peer supervision, which involves professionals who practice the same profession sharing professional knowledge, skills and techniques and supporting each other. Uslusoy et al. (2016) point out that collegiality helps colleagues support each other by providing effective cooperation, increases the efficiency of the institution, and improves the talents and skills of employees.

Just as collegiality can occur in every professional group, it is also possible to carry out collegiate solidarity studies in the field of guidance and psychological counseling. In a study conducted on school counselors, Zins and Murphy (2007) found that almost 64% of participants stated that they had joined a

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peer support group at some point in their careers, while almost 50% were currently members of a peer group. Studies have shown that professional solidarity between psychological counselors reduces the burnout of participants (Güldal et al., 2022) and has a positive effect on the quality of professional life and the perception of psychological empowerment (Üstün et al., 2018).

Psychological counselors mainly work in preschool, primary school, secondary school and high school schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. And it carries out preventive, developmental, curative, protective and crisis intervention studies for the problems experienced by the students in these schools in the fields of educational, professional and personal social problems. According to the Ministry of National Education Guidance and Psychological Counseling Services Regulation (2020), the guidance counselor/psychological counselor is defined as "Personnel who provide guidance and psychological counseling services in educational institutions, who act as program managers in the implementation and coordination of the school guidance and psychological counseling program, and who provide guidance and psychological counseling services in guidance and research centers". According to this regulation, psychological counselors provide guidance and psychological counseling services to students studying at various levels according to social emotional, academic and career development areas. In this context, the differences in the problems of students studying at each level of education are also discussed in terms of the regulation.

The purposes for which guidance and psychological counseling services are provided at each level are given as follows in paragraphs a-d of article 7 of the regulation: At the pre-school level; it is carried out with the aim of "the child getting to know himself, socializing, developing self-confidence, discovering his limits, adapting to school, developing a positive attitude towards school and learning, and gaining awareness about his talents and interests." At primary school level; it is carried out with the aim of the student adapting to school, developing a positive attitude towards educational environments and learning, gaining cognitive skills for learning to learn and transferring what he has learned, knowing himself, developing self-confidence, recognizing and expressing emotions, making friends, and problem solving. At secondary school level; the student acquires life skills such as establishing and developing friendships, decision-making, taking responsibility and conflict resolution, adapts to the changes in adolescence, develops study skills in line with learning methods appropriate to himself, career goals by realizing his interests, talents and personality traits, as well as his strengths and weaknesses. It is carried out with the aim of directing students to higher education institutions in line with this. At high school level; it is carried out in order for the student to evaluate their individual characteristics and create a healthy identity, to adapt to the changes in adolescence, to realize their values and to establish a connection between their own values and social values, to gain productive, systematic and planned study habits, and to gravitate towards higher education, profession and business fields in line with their career goals.

As can be seen, the problems of students at various levels differ from each other, and psychological counselors sometimes work on problems that affect academic success, and sometimes work on personal social problems that are legally obliged to report, such as sexual abuse, harassment and suicide. Psychological counselors may sometimes feel inadequate in finding solutions and preparing an

intervention plan for these problems, which are addressed in a wide range of educational, professional and personal social problem areas. In addition, working with cases such as abuse, suicide, traumatic losses, and violence can cause empathy fatigue in school psychological counselors, as in all mental health professionals (Uslu & Buldukoğlu, 2017). School psychological counselors, who communicate face to face with parents, teachers and others to help solve students' problems, encounter problems that may cause job stress and burnout (Akten, 2007; Meyer & Ponton, 2006). At this point, he needs to exchange ideas with another psychological counselor about the problems he needs to solve in his field and joins colleague solidarity groups (Çoban, 2005).

The collegiality of psychological counselors brings with it many advantages. It can be said that some of these are contributing to professional development, improving cooperation, developing talent and skills, and institutional contribution. As a result of qualitative research conducted by Camadan and Sarı (2021) on the professional development of psychological counselors, it was seen that the theme of collaborating with colleagues came to the fore in the development of practice processes. Güldal et al. (2022) examined the effect of online group peer supervision on the burnout level of school psychological counselors and found that the burnout scores of the experimental group were lower than the control group. Qualitative findings obtained within the scope of the same research revealed that the peer supervision process contributes to the professional development of psychological counselors, gaining different perspectives, realizing that they are not alone and providing emotional support. Another study revealed that through peer supervision, psychological counselors were able to see different perspectives, had the opportunity to see what they did not notice, and felt understood by their colleagues because they had gone through similar experiences (Aladağ et al., 2011). Kim et al. (2022) revealed that counselors found participation in peer supervision crucial for practical assistance, emotional support, expertise development, and institutional support. Chae (2022), on the other hand, argued that peer supervision in school psychological counseling involves a collegial, competent and consultative approach inspired by established frameworks, and encourages professional development among counselors and through supportive practices.

Currently, the most common field of work for guidance and psychological counselors in Turkey is school psychological counseling. Despite this, there are many problems that school psychological counselors encounter while doing their job. Problems such as norm staffing problems, inability to provide the necessary physical conditions, misperception about PDR services, and inadequacy of standardized measurement tools are some of these (Pişkin, 2006; Yeşilyaprak, 2009). Research results have shown that collegiality is an effective method for school psychological counselors in solving problems. At this point, it is thought that it is necessary to determine the views of school psychological counselors regarding collegiality. When the literature was examined, it was seen that studies on colleague solidarity were conducted using mostly quantitative research method with nurses (Karasu et al., 2017; Uslusoy et al., 2016), teachers (Kınal, 2022; Sağlam, 2024) and psychological counselors (Çoban, 2004; Üstün et al., 2018). The study titled "colleague solidarity for psychological counselors" by Çoban (2005) is a compilation. By determining what kind of studies school psychological counselors do on collegiality and what deficiencies they see within the scope of these studies, it can provide data to

researchers about what can be done to improve these experiences. In this context, this research aims to determine school psychological counselors' views on colleague solidarity using a qualitative method. For this purpose, answers are sought to the following questions:

- What are psychological counselors' views on collegiality?
- What is the contribution of psychological counselors' work on collegiality to their professional development?
- What is the impact of the support psychological counselors perceive regarding collegiality on their personal development?

Method

Research Model

In this study, a qualitative research was conducted to examine school psychological counselors' views on the colleague solidarity group process and content analysis was used in the research. Qualitative research is a method in which deep and specific data is obtained from smaller study groups rather than large samples; it is a research method that uses techniques such as observation and interview (Baltacı, 2019). In this method, it is essential to examine human perceptions and events in depth in their natural environment and social reality, and it also has a holistic perspective that combines different disciplines (Hatch, 2002). Content analysis, which is frequently preferred in social sciences, helps to make the subjective and dispersed data obtained through qualitative research objective and systematic (Büyüköztürk et al., 2009).

Participants

The study group of the research consists of 19 school psychological counselors working at various educational levels in Amasya. 11 of the participants are women and 8 are men, the average age is 36.9. Participants were selected according to the purposeful sampling method. In the purposeful sampling method, researchers select a study group suitable for the purpose they have determined (Howitt & Cramer, 2020). In this research, since school psychological counselors who participated in collegiality were requested to be included in the research, the application was carried out with school psychological counselors who participated in the collegiality study that had just been conducted at Amasya Guidance and Research Center.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Group

Participant	Age	Seniority	Gender	Educational Status	Workplace
1.	53	30	Female	Undergraduate	Secondary School
2.	25	1	Male	Undergraduate	High School
3.	30	8	Female	Undergraduate	High School
4.	38	15	Male	Undergraduate	High School
5.	51	22	Male	Undergraduate	High School
6.	28	4	Female	Undergraduate	Secondary School
7.	38	17	Female	Postgraduate	Primary School
8.	32	12	Female	Undergraduate	Primary School
9.	32	8	Female	Undergraduate	Kindergarten
10.	45	22	Male	Undergraduate	Guidance Research Center (GRC)
11	25	2	Female	Undergraduate	High School
12.	45	22	Male	Postgraduate	High School
13.	28	5	Female	Undergraduate	Primary School
14.	35	13	Female	Undergraduate	High School
15.	39	16	Male	Undergraduate	High School
16.	40	17	Male	Undergraduate	Secondary School
17.	35	12	Female	Undergraduate	High School
18.	37	15	Male	Undergraduate	Secondary School
19	46	24	Female	Undergraduate	High School

Measures

As the data collection tool of this study; A personal information form, in which information about the participants such as age, seniority, gender, place of duty, and department they graduated from, and a semi-structured interview form with 5 open-ended questions prepared by the researchers were used.

Below are the questions in the interview form.

1. Could you explain the nature of the relationship/communication between colleagues in the colleague solidarity group process?

2. What is the impact of the collegiate group process on your professional development? Could you please explain?

3. What kind of support did you receive from the group process in which you participated as a collegiate group? Could you please explain?

4. During the colleague solidarity group process, what different practices did you learn about the cases you may encounter in your profession? Could you please explain?

5. What do you think about your options for asking for help after the peer support group process?

The questions in the semi-structured interview form used in the research were first presented to the opinion of two experts who work on school psychological counseling. In line with the feedback from experts, the question items were reviewed and corrections were made. Then, the interview form was tested through a pilot application with a school psychological counselor. After the pilot application, the questions were reviewed and the final form was reached.

Data Analysis/Process

Before proceeding with the data collection step, permission was obtained from the Amasya University Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Number: 188552). Then, the data collection step was started. During the data collection process, 19 school psychological counselors were reached and their participation in the study was provided on a voluntary basis. Then, meeting days and times were determined with the participants, and individual interviews were held via video call, lasting approximately 30 minutes.

The data obtained through the interviews were converted into written documents and content analysis was started. The answers given by the participants to the questions in the form were examined and codes were created by examining these data within the conceptual framework. As a result of the codes created later, themes and sub-themes were determined by taking into account the common points of the codes. In the last stage, the findings were explained based on the literature and conclusions and suggestions were put forward in the context of the findings.

Findings

All data obtained in the study were examined by the researchers and a title was given to the data that could be collected under the same title. Then, the data was organized by making direct quotations from the psychological counselors' statements regarding these topics. While the psychological counselors' opinions were conveyed, direct quotations were made by giving numbers to the participants. The headings obtained through this process formed the themes of the research, and the subheadings formed the sub-themes of the research. As a result of the content analysis, psychological counselors' opinions

regarding the colleague solidarity group process were collected under four main themes and 10 sub-themes. These themes; the nature of the process, its impact on professional development, perceived support and awareness raising. The findings obtained as a result of the research are presented in Table 2 below, classified as themes and sub-themes. In addition, direct quotes from the participants' statements are also included in this section.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Nature of the process	Communication dimension
	Relationship dimension
Impact on professional development	Transfer of functional strategies
	Gaining different perspectives
	Experience sharing
Perceived support	Social support
	Vocational support
Raise awareness	Use of official means
	Ability to ask for help
	Peer supervision

Findings Regarding the Theme "Quality of the Group Process"

Collegiate solidarity is the cooperation and solidarity of colleagues with each other. There is no hierarchical structure in this solidarity provided by employees working in the same profession. In this context, participants asked, "Can you explain the nature of the relationship/communication between colleagues in the colleague solidarity group process?" A theme and two sub-themes were obtained based on the answers to the question. The theme of the quality of the process is grouped under two sub-themes: communication and relationship dimensions.

Communication Dimension

Participants stated that they found the communication in the peer solidarity group process transparent, empathetic, supportive and sincere. For example, one participant (P8) said, "A language that was supportive and gave positive feedback was used in our communication within the group." stated as. Two of the participants evaluated both the communication and relationship dimensions of the colleague solidarity group process and defined it as a positive structure in terms of both dimensions. One participant (P9) said, "I have been in the support groups since they were created by Amasya Ram. As psychological counselors, we generally work alone in schools. We need our groups when there is something we want to share. In this sense, I have seen a lot of benefits from our support groups. Our communication is quite good. "We have created a sense of group unity and trust between us and our group mates."

Relationship Dimension

Participants stated that the relationship between colleagues in the peer solidarity group process is especially based on trust and confidentiality. One participant (P16) said, "We communicated based on trust and confidentiality in our sharing about the cases. "We had an environment where we could easily share our feelings, thoughts, knowledge and ideas." expressed in the form. Psychological counselors stated that they could easily ask any questions they wanted in the group, that they felt comfortable and that they were not judged. One participant (P17) expressed his views as follows: "There is a communication based on trust. It has been a process in which I have not hesitated to share anything in the support groups I have attended so far. Group rules were created together and it is a friendly environment where care is taken to comply with those rules. I notice that both myself and my group mates come willingly. Sometimes there are sessions where we lose track of time. In other words, there is a very fluid and sharing-based relationship process."

In summary, psychological counselors stated that they found the communication in the peer solidarity group process transparent, empathetic, supportive and sincere. They stated that the relationship between colleagues is a relationship based on trust and confidentiality. It seems that the communication and relationship in the collegiate group process is similar to the therapeutic relationship in the psychological counseling process.

Findings Regarding the Theme "Impact on Professional Development"

"What is the impact of the colleague solidarity group process on your professional development? Could you please explain?" Based on the answers given by the participants to the question, the theme titled "Effect on Professional Development" and the sub-themes of transferring functional strategies, gaining different perspectives and sharing experience were reached.

Transfer of Functional Strategies

Under this heading, the positive impact of the transfer of theories, techniques and strategies, which colleagues follow and see the positive effects from the participants' answers, on the professional development of other members is discussed. For example, one participant (P10) explained his views on this issue as follows: "I learn new useful techniques from my colleagues in the group. I am gaining new skills in responding to problems."

Gaining Different Perspectives

Participants stated that they gained different perspectives through the group process, as well as their own experiences, and that this contributed to their professional development. For example, one participant (P3) expressed his views as follows: "It enables us to obtain information about many different issues, make versatile evaluations, and makes it easier for us to find different solutions to the problems we encounter. It affects our professional development positively." Another participant (P6) said, "As part of our profession, it is necessary to be open to broad and different perspectives, and during the group, he supported my direction on this issue the most. In addition, thanks to the sharings made, I had the opportunity to examine cases I had not encountered before and gain experience." explained as follows. Another participant (P16) expressed his views on this issue as follows: "The shared cases also gave us experience. We also produced solutions for cases in these groups. This situation guided us in similar cases."

Experience Sharing

In colleague solidarity groups, school psychological counselors working at the same educational level are in the same group and each has different experience. Participants stated that sharing these experiences in the group process contributed to their professional development. For example, a newly appointed psychological counselor expressed his views as follows: (P2) "I felt like a fish out of water because it was my first year in the profession and there was no preparation for the Ministry of Education during university education. Each colleague in the group enlightened me with their own experiences. They showed me how to behave in complex situations."

The data obtained under the theme of "Effect on professional development" reveals that the peer solidarity group process positively affects the professional development of psychological counselors. Colleague solidarity, in its most general sense, includes colleagues supporting each other in every field they need and sharing professional knowledge, techniques and skills (Çoban, 2005). In this context, it is observed that the peer solidarity group process has achieved its main purpose.

Findings Regarding the "Perceived Support" Theme

Working with difficult cases such as abuse, suicide, traumatic experiences, losses, and violence can cause emotional fatigue in mental health professionals (Uslu and Buldukoğlu, 2017). It is thought that psychological counselors, who are mental health professionals, will also be affected by such a situation

and will need social support in this process. Participants were asked: "What kind of support did you receive from the group process in which you participated as a collegiate solidarity?" Could you please explain?" The answers given to the question were examined. In line with the answers, the theme of perceived social support and two sub-themes: social support and professional support were reached.

Social Support

Participants stated that they received social support from other psychological counselors during the collegiate solidarity process and that they felt that they were not alone. For example, (P18) explained this support as follows: "There would be moments when I felt inadequate, and seeing that others could feel this too could make me feel more sufficient and give me courage. Sometimes I would learn from other people's mistakes. Sometimes the good behavior and practices of the group members were an example to me." (P14) the social support he received from the group; "Listening to similar processes that my colleagues went through during the periods when I experienced extreme burnout and being able to share the cases that increased my emotional intensity in an environment of trust helped me to hold tighter to my profession by relieving the fatigue I experienced." stated as. Another participant (P19) expressed his views as follows: "I am someone who joined the school psychological counselor staff after changing my branch. This solidarity process was very important to me. The support I received from the group, just when I needed it and when I started working at a challenging level like high school, felt like a miracle." expressed in the form.

Colleague groups, which are the subject of this study, are groups formed by psychological counselors to support each other in the face of professional difficulties. Research findings reveal that psychological counselors provide both professional and social support from the group process and do not feel alone. It is thought that the psychological health of psychological counselors will increase with perceived support, which will have a positive impact on professional life.

Vocational Support

Psychological counselors may encounter a wide variety of cases in their professional lives. In this sense, when the participants' responses were examined, it was seen that they stated that the group process provided them with professional support and that they learned about different approaches and techniques. For example, one participant (P10) explained the professional support he received from the group as follows: "I felt that my professional loneliness decreased. While I was struggling with the problems, I saw that others were experiencing the same problems." Another participant (P5) expressed his opinions as follows: "I think school psychological counseling is an intense and stressful working environment. For this reason, the suggestions and opinions of colleagues who have experienced similar difficult processes are important to me. For this reason, I can say that I received professional support from my bandmates." expressed as.

Findings Regarding the "Raising Awareness" Theme

Psychological counselors may encounter challenging cases such as sexual abuse, violence, substance addiction, involvement in crime and gang involvement in their professional lives. The experience and guidance of colleagues becomes important on what process to follow in the face of such challenging cases. In this context, "What different practices did you learn about the cases you may encounter in your profession during the colleague solidarity group process?" and "What do you think about your options for asking for help after the peer solidarity group process?" Three sub-themes were obtained based on the answers given by the participants to the questions. These sub-themes; the use of official means, the ability to ask for help and peer supervision.

Use of Official Means

When the answers of the participants are examined; it was observed that they stated that they gained information about where to apply and report in case of challenging cases during the colleague solidarity group process, and in this sense, this group process had positive effects for them. For example, one participant (P2) stated, "I learned about where to apply on which subject." Another participant (P13) said the following on this subject: "While working on some cases, I saw, thanks to my colleagues, that I had options such as the Family Social Policies Directorate, the Child Protection Board, and the Police Children's Branch."

Ability to Ask For Help

In accordance with the principles of guidance services, psychological counselors can seek help from other experts or guide the client in the face of some cases they encounter. One participant (P2) commented on the issue of asking for help: "I gained information about where to apply for which issue. My options for asking for help have diversified greatly thanks to this group process. Every colleague in the group made a different contribution to me."

Peer Supervision

Participants stated that the feedback they received from their colleagues regarding the cases in which they did not know what to do during the colleague solidarity process was in the nature of peer supervision, and that this contributed to their professional development. (P7) expressed his views on this subject as follows: "I feel the supervision effect. "When I share the problems I experience, different perspectives can be revealed." Another participant (K6) said, "I saw that I could benefit from each of my colleagues. "I realized that each of my colleagues has improved themselves in a different field and I now have many colleagues to get support from." stated as.

One participant (K15) explained his thoughts as follows: "The professional solidarity group process made significant contributions to my professional development. First of all, it prevented the feeling of pessimism by seeing that we were not the only ones experiencing the problems we encountered in the schools where we worked alone, and our self-confidence increased by helping us develop ideas and

plans on how to act in case the issues we shared were encountered in the coming years. In addition, getting different opinions helped us make the right decisions and create the most appropriate intervention method. "I think that our efficiency in schools has increased as a result of the sharing we made in the group."

As a result, psychological counselors think that the peer solidarity group process has positive effects professionally and personally, that they feel more competent in the face of problems at the end of the process, and this increases their professional productivity. It is thought that this situation will increase the quality of the guidance and psychological counseling services they provide at the school where they work and thus have positive effects on the students. For this reason, it can be said that peer solidarity groups are an effective method that can be used to cope with the problems faced by psychological counselors and to increase their professional competence.

Discussion

As a result of this research, which tried to determine the experiences of psychological counselors regarding colleague solidarity, it was concluded that colleague solidarity contributes to the professional development of psychological counselors, increases perceived social support, is effective in reducing the feeling of loneliness, helps raise awareness and improves communication. In this section, these findings are interpreted in line with the relevant literature.

Since the current research was designed in accordance with the qualitative approach, psychological counselors gave answers appropriate to their own experiences to questions about the nature of the relationship regarding the colleague solidarity group process, their contribution to professional development, the type of support they received and their knowledge of the cases. As a result of the analysis of qualitative data, psychological counselors' collegiality regarding group experiences; It was concluded that they focused on four themes: the nature of the process, its impact on professional development, perceived support and awareness raising. *The theme of the quality of the process* consists of two sub-themes: communication and the dimension of the relationship. *The theme of impact on professional development* consists of three sub-themes: transfer of functional strategies, gaining different perspectives, and sharing experience. *The perceived support theme* consisted of two sub-themes: social and professional support. *The theme of raising awareness* consists of three sub-themes: use of official means, ability to ask for help and peer supervision. There are many research results in the literature that support these findings.

In the findings regarding the theme of the quality of the process, it was seen that psychological counselors evaluated group experiences of colleague solidarity in two dimensions: communication and relationship dimensions. Accordingly, psychological counselors stated that they found the communication in the colleague solidarity group process transparent, empathetic, supportive and sincere, and that the relationship between colleagues was especially based on trust and confidentiality.

This finding obtained as a result of the research supports the results of previous research in the literature. As a result of the research conducted by Yıldırım-Kurtuluş et al. (2022), it was concluded that peer supervisors see the convenience of establishing comfortable and friendly relationships and their supportive positions as an advantage. Additionally, Güldal et al. (2022) examined the effect of online group peer supervision on the burnout levels of psychological counselors and revealed that peer supervision helps provide a positive group environment. Similarly, in the experimental study conducted by Üstün et al. (2018), it was seen that colleague solidarity groups were effective in increasing the professional satisfaction of school psychological counselors and reducing the level of burnout. In addition, the findings of the study revealed that peer solidarity groups had positive effects on psychological empowerment in the Experiment1 group, which participated in colleague solidarity groups for several years in a row.

In the findings regarding the theme of impact on professional development, it was seen that psychological counselors evaluated group experiences of colleague solidarity in three sub-themes: transfer of functional strategies, gaining different perspectives and sharing experience. This finding obtained as a result of the research is consistent with the results of previous research in the literature. Güldal et al. (2022) also revealed that collegiate group experiences have a positive contribution to the professional development of psychological counselors. Similar to these findings, as a result of a systematic review study by Lohani and Sharma (2023) in which they examined the effect of the clinical supervision process on the self-awareness and self-efficacy of psychotherapists and psychological counselors, it has been shown that the supervision process has a positive effect on psychological counselors and psychotherapists and contributes to their professional development. Additionally, it has been emphasized that clinical supervision has a significant impact on key developmental areas such as skills, self-awareness and self-efficacy. In the study conducted with nurses by Karasu et al. (2017), it was found that job satisfaction increased as professional solidarity among nurses increased. As a result of his research with primary school teachers, Kinal (2022) obtained a positive significant relationship between primary school teachers' perceptions of collegiality and their perceptions of enjoyment from teaching. Amanvermez et al. (2020) similarly reported that psychological counselors expressed opinions that peer supervision experiences contributed to the learning process and supported their professional development in terms of listening to different cases and finding solutions. In a qualitative study by Camadan and Sarı (2021) examining the professional development of psychological counselors, the question asked to psychological counselors was "How do you ensure your professional development?" It was observed that 39 psychological counselors answered the question by having meetings with colleagues. These results underline that collegial group experiences support the professional development of psychological counselors.

In the findings regarding the theme of perceived support, psychological counselors evaluated the collegiality and group experiences under two sub-themes: social and professional support. Accordingly, the participants stated that they received social support from other psychological counselors during the colleague solidarity process and that they felt that they were not alone in working with difficult cases such as abuse, suicide, traumatic experiences, loss, and violence. In this sense, psychological counselors

stated that the group process provided them with professional support and contributed to their knowledge of different approaches and techniques. This finding obtained as a result of the research shows similar characteristics to the results of previous research in the literature. Psychological counselors also work with challenging cases such as abuse, suicide, traumatic experiences, loss, and violence, and working with these cases causes psychological counselors to become traumatized both psychologically and secondary to these cases (Uslu and Buldukoğlu, 2017) they may also feel inadequate in the steps to follow in intervening in these cases (Uçar et al., 2020). In peer solidarity groups, psychological counselors can provide emotional support when they realize that they have colleagues who have similar problems to their own, making them feel that they are not alone. Therefore, it may be possible for psychological counselors to get ideas from each other on how to deal with these difficult cases through colleague support groups, and they can normalize the situation more easily by realizing that they have other colleagues experiencing similar problems. As a result, he/she may feel more competent in handling difficult cases, thanks to the knowledge and professional experience he/she receives from his/her colleagues. Similarly, Kim et al. (2022) emphasized that peer supervision positively affects school counselors, increases professional development, emotional support and identity formation, and helps develop a sense of community.

In the findings regarding the theme of raising awareness, it was seen that psychological counselors evaluated group experiences of colleague solidarity under three sub-themes: use of official means, ability to ask for help and peer supervision. Accordingly, psychological counselors emphasized that during the peer solidarity group process, they gained information about where to apply and report challenging cases, and their awareness that they could seek help from other experts or direct the client in the face of some cases they encountered increased. In addition, psychological counselors underlined that the feedback they received from their colleagues regarding the cases in which they did not know what to do during the colleague solidarity process was in the nature of peer supervision, and that this contributed to their professional development. This finding obtained as a result of the research is consistent with the results of previous research in the literature. Amanvermez et al. (2020) examined the experiences of psychological counselors in online supervision and peer supervision, and underlined that the supportive and encouraging role of the supervisor in the supervision groups as a teacher and psychological counselor helps to provide control and authority. Additionally, the importance of receiving feedback from the supervisor and giving feedback to peers in group supervision was revealed and it was concluded that discussing ethical issues during the supervision process is effective. As a result of the study examining the effects of peer and supervision relationships on group supervision in psychological counseling, Chui and Luk (2021) found that high supervisor working cooperation within and between interns was associated with high supervision satisfaction. And, higher inter-trainee supervisor work collaboration was associated with higher counseling self-efficacy. Additionally, better intra-and inter-intern peer relationships were associated with higher counseling self-efficacy.

Suggestions and Limitations

In this study, school psychological counselors' opinions regarding the colleague solidarity group process carried out by Amasya Guidance and Research Center were examined. Suggestions were made for future studies in line with the findings obtained from the research. The professional lives of school counselors are stressful and the cases they encounter can be quite challenging. In order to provide more qualified psychological counseling and guidance services in schools; It may be recommended to increase the number of studies in the form of colleague solidarity groups where psychological counselors can receive both professional and personal support. In this study, data were collected from 19 school psychological counselors with a semi-structured interview form consisting of 5 open-ended questions created by the researcher. In future research, it may be recommended to conduct more in-depth studies with different questions and larger samples.

This research, which focuses on examining school psychological counselors' views on the peer solidarity group process, should be evaluated in the light of some limitations. The use of a semi-structured interview form created by the researcher in the study may be a limitation. The fact that there was only one participant in the study working in a kindergarten can be considered a limitation.

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