The Mediator Role of Self-Efficacy in the Relationship Between School Counselors' Levels of Intercultural Sensitivity and Social Justice[1]

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Abstract

School counselors have an ethical obligation to respect and be sensitive to students' differences and cultural diversity. Advocating for more socially just and equitable practices in the education system is a requirement of counselors' professional identity. In recent years, the events in Turkey's near and far neighborhood have increased its cultural diversity. Therefore, school counselors' advocacy competencies and efforts for social justice in schools have become even more critical. This study examined the mediating role of school counselor self-efficacy in the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and social justice levels of school counselors. The survey was conducted with 347 school counselors, and data was collected using the Social Justice Scale, Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and The School Counselors SelfEfficacy Scale. As a result of the study, it was found that self-efficacy had a partial mediating effect on the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and social justice levels of school counselors. In line with these results, future directions for increasing the effectiveness of school counselors' advocacy efforts for social justice are discussed. It was suggested to include practices that improve competencies in intercultural sensitivity in psychological counsellor training programmes, to provide supervision support to school psychological counsellors and to plan in-service training activities to increase their self-efficacy.

Keywords: School counselor, social justice, intercultural sensitivity, school counselor self-efficacy.

Introduction

Technological developments, globalization, war, natural disasters, economic crises, epidemics and pandemics cause living conditions to change and become increasingly diverse. Under these conditions, ensuring equality of opportunity in education becomes difficult. Changes require professionals in many professions to evaluate their roles and competencies. One of these professions is psychological counseling. Psychological counselors, who are mostly employed in schools in Turkey, need to adopt a social justice approach to provide an effective service in a school environment where students differ in terms of race, language, religion, culture and socioeconomic level. Topkapı (2020) lists 21st-century counseling competencies as personal and professional development, multicultural counseling, accountability, use of technology, collaboration and teamwork, research and leadership, social justice and advocacy. One of these social justice competencies is the fight against inequality in individuals' full participation in society and access to resources due to their race, gender, age, mental ability, education, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (Lee, 2005).

In counseling, social justice requires professional action to change social structures, values and practices to facilitate access to resources for disadvantaged groups (Goodman et al., 2004). In other words, counselors should actively seek to change institutions and systems perpetuating unfair practices and policies regarding accessibility, resource distribution and human rights (Fouad et al., 2006). Ratts et al.

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(2004) defined social justice in the field of counseling as an approach that uses advocacy to alleviate economic, political, and social conditions that hinder the personal, social, career, and academic development of individuals, families, and communities, and made the most crucial emphasis on the subject by stating that social justice is a fifth force after psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and multicultural approaches. Furthermore, the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2005) (Section A.6.a.) reiterated this emphasis by recommending that counselors adopt an advocacy role at the micro, meso, and macro levels and examine the barriers faced by clients. ACA (2014), on the other hand, not only recommends but also states that it is both a professional and ethical obligation for counselors to have multicultural and social justice counseling competencies to provide quality services to those they serve. Social justice in school counseling includes creating learning opportunities for students by eliminating barriers to learning, promoting positive systemic changes in schools, and collaborating with necessary institutions and organizations inside and outside the school (ASCA, 2019). Again, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2021) emphasizes that school counselors are change agents who must work to ensure that all students have a fair chance to access opportunities.

In Turkish schools, students can vary in culture, socioeconomic status and special needs. However, the most important element of diversity that comes to mind in recent years is refugee students. UNICEF (2019) reported that Turkey is home to the largest registered refugee population in the world. There are 3.6 million Syrian refugees under temporary protection in Turkey, 1.6 million of whom are children. As of 2016, the number of these children attending formal education has increased to 684,728 which is expected to continue. It is not only Syrian refugees; according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2021), the total foreign population residing in Turkey is 1,792,036. When examined by country, the distribution is as follows: 18% Iraq, 10.2% Afghanistan, 7.2% Iran, and 6.9% Turkmenistan citizens. Bemak and Chung (2008) emphasize that as the demographics of countries continue to change and diversify, school counselors need to change or adapt their roles to meet the needs of a more culturally diverse student population. One of these roles is to have intercultural sensitivity. Intercultural sensitivity is advocated as a prerequisite for intercultural competence (Chen & Starosta, 1997) and the ability to recognize and experience cultural differences (Hammer et al., 2003). Rodríguez Izquierdo (2021) emphasizes that intercultural sensitivity is one of the most effective skills in stretching misconceptions and prejudices about individuals from different cultures. In a counseling relationship dominated by cultural prejudices, it does not seem possible to provide therapeutic conditions such as respect, unconditional acceptance and transparency. Moreover, Hodges (2001) emphasizes that ignoring cultural influences and diversity in counseling is short-sighted, and threatens the profession's viability. As a result, as the American Psychological Association (APA) (2003) emphasizes, not developing intercultural competence means not adhering to the ethical standards of the profession.

In light of the above explanations, it is understood that school counselors need to improve their competencies in social justice in terms of a fair school environment and respect for cultural differences due to increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in schools. Empirical studies on social justice, whose necessity and current status are evaluated, are pretty limited. Although Turkey is a multicultural society, there are only a few studies on social justice in the domestic counseling literature (Kağnıcı, 2015; Kağnıcı & Denizli, 2018; Karairmak, 2015; Kılıç et al., 2022; Topkapı, 2020). It is thought that when school counselors are sensitive and respectful towards different cultures, they can better intervene in social justice problems that may arise among students, mainly due to cultural diversity. It is thought

that determining the factors related to social justice is important for counselor education and school counseling practices to prevent harmful situations in a school environment where cultural prejudices are dominant and disadvantaged students are not treated fairly.

Intercultural Sensitivity and Social Justice

Intercultural sensitivity is defined as a concept that encourages intercultural communication, understands different cultural characteristics and evaluates them with a positive emotional approach (Bekiroğlu & Balcı, 2014). School counselors' intercultural sensitivity refers to their capacity to develop empathy and understanding for students from different cultures (Bennett, 1986). High intercultural sensitivity enables a sensitive approach to students' differences (Hammer et al., 2003). At the same time, it is an ethical obligation for school counselors to have intercultural sensitivity, which includes characteristics such as respecting students' individual differences and cultural diversity (APA, 2003).

In a global society, cultural prejudices, exclusion, racism, equality and justice are frequently used. Ratts (2006) argues that social justice has emerged as the fifth power, while Ng (2012) claims that in recent years, with globalization and internationalization of higher education institutions, there has been a movement towards internationalization in the field of counseling and internationalization may develop as the sixth power in the field of counseling. It is emphasized that increasing the intercultural sensitivity of counselors is critical in ensuring equal opportunities and developing more inclusive policies for disadvantaged groups (Kağnıcı, 2017).

Intercultural sensitivity and social justice are interrelated concepts. Elmalı (2020), in his study conducted with social workers, concluded that there is a significant relationship between intercultural sensitivity and social justice of social workers. While intercultural sensitivity provides an empathetic and prejudice-free approach to individuals' cultural differences, social justice supports an active effort to ensure equality and a favorable climate by addressing differences. It is thought that school counselors with intercultural sensitivity can better serve as change agents, collaborators and social justice advocates.

The Mediating Role of School Counselor Self-Efficacy

Considering the changing conditions of today's world and school counselors' current roles and responsibilities, the question of how much knowledge, skills and competence school counselors have to fulfill these roles and responsibilities comes to mind. It is stated that the most important factor affecting the ability to provide effective counseling help is counselor self-efficacy (Sharpley & Ridgway, 1993). Bandura (1977) states that the most important predictor of a person's level of perseverance when faced with obstacles or failures, the amount of effort spent, and the determination of which actions to take are the individual's self-efficacy expectations. Larson and Daniels (1998) investigated to what extent self-efficacy affects individuals' behaviors, and counseling, and they defined self-efficacy in the field of counseling as counselors' beliefs and judgments about their ability to use effective counseling strategies.

In Turkey, psychological counselors primarily work in schools. Counselors need to have strong self-efficacy to fulfill their duties and responsibilities in schools and overcome the obstacles they face. Butts and Gutierrez (2018) define school counselor self-efficacy as the school counselor's attitude toward the ability to apply counseling techniques competently while providing counseling services to a student. Johnson (2003) defines school counselor self-efficacy as a school counselor's beliefs about their ability to perform any school-related task. Sutton and Fall (1995) state that these beliefs are very important for school counselors who often cannot find the necessary support system when facing challenging situations. High self-efficacy of school counselors is associated with increased levels of social justice

(Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011), participation in school-based intervention activities (Mullen & Lambie, 2016), setting higher goals for themselves and showing strong commitment, motivation, and perseverance to achieve these goals (Bardhoshi & Um, 2021; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) contribute to their willingness to be more effective in school counseling. The functionality of the self-efficacy concept is not limited to the school setting; meta-analytic studies have demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance in the general work context as well (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). In addition, school counselor's belief in self-efficacy contributes to improving school climate (Sutton & Fall, 1995), providing effective counseling services (Ernst, 2012), increasing success in school (Bodenhorn et al., 2010), and raising multicultural counseling competence when working with refugee students (Na, 2012) has an important place. In parallel with these studies, Boderhorn et al. (2010) also state that school counselors with high self-efficacy are likely to impact students more substantially.

In the literature, many studies investigate the self-efficacy of school counselors. However, although the school counseling literature has encouraged more involvement in social justice, equality, and multiculturalism in recent years (Bemak & Chung, 2005; House & Sears, 2002), studies on school counselors' intercultural sensitivity level and social justice attitudes in Turkey are limited. If higher self-efficacy increases the likelihood of performing a preferred behavior (Bandura, 2001; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Mullen & Lambie, 2016), school counselor self-efficacy may support the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and social justice level.

Increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in schools necessitates preventive work on respect for cultural differences and ultimately a fair school environment. However, prejudices against students from different cultures can be observed in schools. School counselors need to expand their areas of responsibility in a school environment where prejudices prevail and there is no equality. Nilsson and Schmidt (2005) state that when school counselors adopt the principle of social justice and equality, they can plan appropriate services for students and become pioneers in intercultural sensitivity by collaborating with teachers. In addition to intercultural sensitivity, it is thought to be important for school counselors to have high self-efficacy to deal with obstacles and difficulties in a school environment where cultural prejudices exist and disadvantaged students are not treated fairly. It can be expected that the higher the self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors in fulfilling these roles, the more likely they are to strive for intercultural sensitivity in schools and fulfill tasks social justice tasks. Accordingly, the following hypothesis will be tested in this study:

H: School counselor self-efficacy mediates the relationship between school counselors' intercultural sensitivity and social justice levels.

Determining the variables related to the social justice approach can help counselor educators define, plan and implement what can be done to improve counselors' understanding of social justice. However, although school counselors have current roles such as social justice and respect for cultural differences, no study measuring the intercultural sensitivity levels of school counselors was found in the literature, and the research on their social justice levels was found to be quite limited. The current study is thought to fill a gap in the literature.

Method

Research Design

In this study, a relational research design, which is a type of quantitative research method, was employed to examine the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between school counselors'

levels of social justice and intercultural sensitivity. The relational research design refers to a type of research in which relationships between two or more variables are explored without any manipulation or intervention (Büyüköztürk et al., 2022).

Participants

This correlational survey model research was conducted with school counselors working in various provinces of Turkey. Participants were selected using the convenience sampling method. The sample consisted of 347 school counselors (250 female (72.0%) and 97 male (28%). Of the participants, 138 had a professional seniority of 1-5 years, 97 had a professional seniority of 6-10 years, 53 had a professional seniority of 11-15 years, and 59 had a professional seniority of 16 years or more. Regarding education level, 250 participants were undergraduate graduates and 97 were postgraduate graduates. Thirty of the participants are under the age of 25, 218 are between the ages of 25-34, 61 are between the ages of 35-44 and 38 are over the age of 45. According to the place of residence, 159 of the participants live in the district, 72 in the city and 116 in the metropolitan area. According to the level of employment, 31 of the participants worked in kindergarten, 82 in primary school, 116 in middle school and 118 in high school.

Data Collection Tools

The School Counselor SelfEfficacy Scale (SSES)

In this study, the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) and adapted into Turkish by Erkan (2011) was used to assess individuals' efficacy beliefs regarding their current abilities as school counselors. The scale, which is organized on a five-point Likert scale (1=not at all confident, 5=very confident), consists of 43 items and five dimensions: personal and social development, leadership and assessment, career and academic development, collaboration, and cultural acceptance. In the adaptation study of the scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed the following fit index values: χ^2/df= 1.75, RMSEA= 0.06, SRMR= 0.06, GFI= 0.71, NFI= 0.93, CFI= 0.97, and AGFI= 0.68. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated for the scale's reliability was between .74 and .88 for the sub-dimensions and .96 for the total scale. In this study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated for the scale's reliability was between .74 and .89 for the sub-dimensions and .96 for the total scale.

Social Justice Scale (SJS)

The scale, developed by Torres-Harding et al. (2012) and adapted into Turkish by Cırık (2015), is a seven-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree). The scale consists of 24 items and four sub-dimensions: social justice attitudes, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms and behavioral intentions. In the adaptation study of the scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed the following fit index values: χ^2/df= 2.72, RMSEA= .05, SRMR= .04, GFI= .90, NFI= .96, CFI= .97, and AGFI= .88. In the original scale, internal consistency coefficients ranged from .82 to .95. In the Turkish adaptation study, internal consistency coefficients were calculated between .92 for the total scale and .84 to .92 for the sub-dimensions. In this study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated for the scale's reliability was between .89 and .92 for the subscales and .93 for the scale's total score.

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)

The scale was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) to assess the intercultural sensitivity level of individuals. The original form of the scale, which is organized on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree), consists of five sub-dimensions and a total of 24 items: participation in intercultural interaction, respect for cultural differences, self-confidence in intercultural interaction, enjoyment of intercultural interaction, and care in intercultural interaction. The Turkish version of the

scale adapted into Turkish by Üstün (2011) has one factor and consists of 23 items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the original form of the scale was .88; the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Turkish form was .90. In this study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was .89.

Data Collection

For the research, the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of a university in Turkey (Decision No. 40 and letter dated 23.12.2022) and the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services of the Ministry of National Education (E-94390400-302.08.01 97814 number and dated 22.02.2023) necessary approval and permission were obtained. After the necessary permissions were obtained, the scales were applied to school counselors online in order to reach more school counselors. Before the application, school counselors were informed about the purpose, scope and content. Data were collected from 347 school counselors who volunteered to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 25 and AMOS 24 package programs. After the data were collected, they were analyzed for missing values, outliers, normality and multicollinearity. During the online data collection process, no missing data were found as one question was passed to the next without being marked. In addition, VIF and tolerance values for multicollinearity were also examined and no multicollinearity was found between the variables. As a result, the data of 347 school counselors were used in this study. Firstly, it was examined whether the data were normally distributed. The fact that the skewness values of the variables are between -1.14 and -.04, kurtosis values are between -.29 and 1.64, and values between -2 and +2 are accepted for normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2021) shows that the data are acceptable in terms of normality. As a result of these examinations, it was determined that the necessary assumptions were met and analyses were carried out. Pearson Correlation Coefficients correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between the variables. AMOS analysis program was used to test the mediating role of school counselor self-efficacy in the relationship between social justice and intercultural sensitivity, and the confidence interval of indirect effects was examined with the Bootstrap method using 5000 resampling and a 95% confidence interval. $\chi2$ /df, RMSEA, CFI, GFI, and SRMR values as goodness of fit in the model examined (Doll et al., 1994; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2005).

Findings

Correlation Analysis

The results of the Pearson correlation test to determine the relationship between the variables are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation results between social justice, school counselor self-efficacy and intercultural sensitivity scale scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. ISS Total	1											
2. SSES Total	.55**	1										
3.Personal and social	.51**		1									

development

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
4. Leadership and assessment	.51**			1								
5. Career and academic development	.45**				1							
6. Collaboration	.51**					1						
7. Cultural acceptance	.51**						1					
8. SJS Total	.47**	.59**	.57**	.54**	.49**	.54**	.51**	1				
9. Social justice attitudes	.37**	.40**	.41**	.31**	.30**	.41**	.37**		1			
10. Perceived behavioral control	.41**	.58**	.55**	.56**	.47**	.53**	.53**			1		
11. Subjective norms	.26**	.40**	.36**	.41**	.40**	.32**	.31**				1	
12. Behavioral intentions	.41**	.47**	.46**	.45**	.38**	.43**	.40**					1

*p<.05, **p<.01

According to the correlation analysis, there was a moderate relationship between school counselors' ISS total scores and the total scores of SSES (*r*= .55), as well as the subscale scores for Personal and social development (*r*= .55), leadership and assessment (*r*= .51), career and academic development (*r*= .45), collaboration (*r*= .51), and cultural acceptance (*r*= .51). Additionally, there was a moderate relationship with SJS total scores (*r*= .47), perceived behavioral control (*r*= .41), and behavioral intention (r=.41) subscale scores. However, there was a low positive relationship between school counselors' ISS total scores and the subscale scores for social justice attitudes (*r*= .37) and subjective norms (*r*= .26) (*p*<.05).

There was a moderate positive correlation between school counselors' total SSES scores and total SJS scores (*r*= .59), as well as the subscale scores for social justice attitudes (*r*= .40), perceived behavioral control (*r*= .58), subjective norms (*r*= .40), and behavioral intention (*r*= .47) (*p*<.05).

There was a moderate positive correlation between school counselors' SSES personal and social development subscale scores and SJS total scores (*r*= .57), as well as the subscale scores for social justice attitudes (*r*= .41), perceived behavioral control (*r*= .55), and behavioral intention (*r*= .46). Additionally, there was a low positive correlation with the subscale scores for subjective norms (*r*= .36) (*p*<.05).

There was a moderate positive correlation between school counselors' SSES leadership and assessment subscale scores and SJS total scores (*r*= .54), as well as the subscale scores for perceived behavioral control (*r*= .56), subjective norms (*r*= .41), and behavioral intention (*r*= .45). Additionally, there was a low positive correlation with the subscale scores for social justice attitudes (*r*= .31) (*p*<.05).

There was a moderate positive correlation between school counselors' SSES career and academic development subscale scores and SJS total scores (*r*= .49), as well as the subscale scores for perceived behavioral control (*r*= .47) and subjective norms (*r*= .40). Additionally, there was a low positive correlation with the subscale scores for social justice attitudes (*r*= .30) and behavioral intention (*r*= .38) (*p*<.05).

There was a moderate positive correlation between school counselors' SSES collaboration subscale scores and SJS total scores (*r*= .54), as well as the subscale scores for social justice attitudes (*r*= .41),

perceived behavioral control (*r*= .53), and behavioral intention (*r*= .43). Additionally, there was a low positive correlation with the subscale scores for subjective norms (*r*= .32) (*p*<.05).

There was a moderate positive correlation between school counselors' SSES cultural acceptance subscale scores and SJS total scores (*r*= .51), as well as the subscale scores for perceived behavioral control (*r* =.53) and behavioral intention (*r*= .40). Additionally, there was a low positive correlation with the subscale scores for social justice attitudes (*r*= .37) and subjective norms (*r*= .31) (*p*<.05).

Model Testing

The mediating role of school counselors' self-efficacy in the relationship between their social justice and intercultural sensitivity levels was tested. As a result of the analysis, it was observed that the error covariances e23-e28 and e29-e30 were related. After adjusting for the error covariances, the model was retested. When the analysis results were examined, the model demonstrated acceptable fit indices: [χ2/df= 2.41, RMSEA= 0.06, CFI= 0.87, GFI= 0.81, SRMR= 0.06, and RMSEA= 0.06]. The results of the mediation model analysis are presented in Figure 1, while the path coefficients are displayed in Figure 2. Direct and indirect effects among the variables in the model are detailed in Table 2.

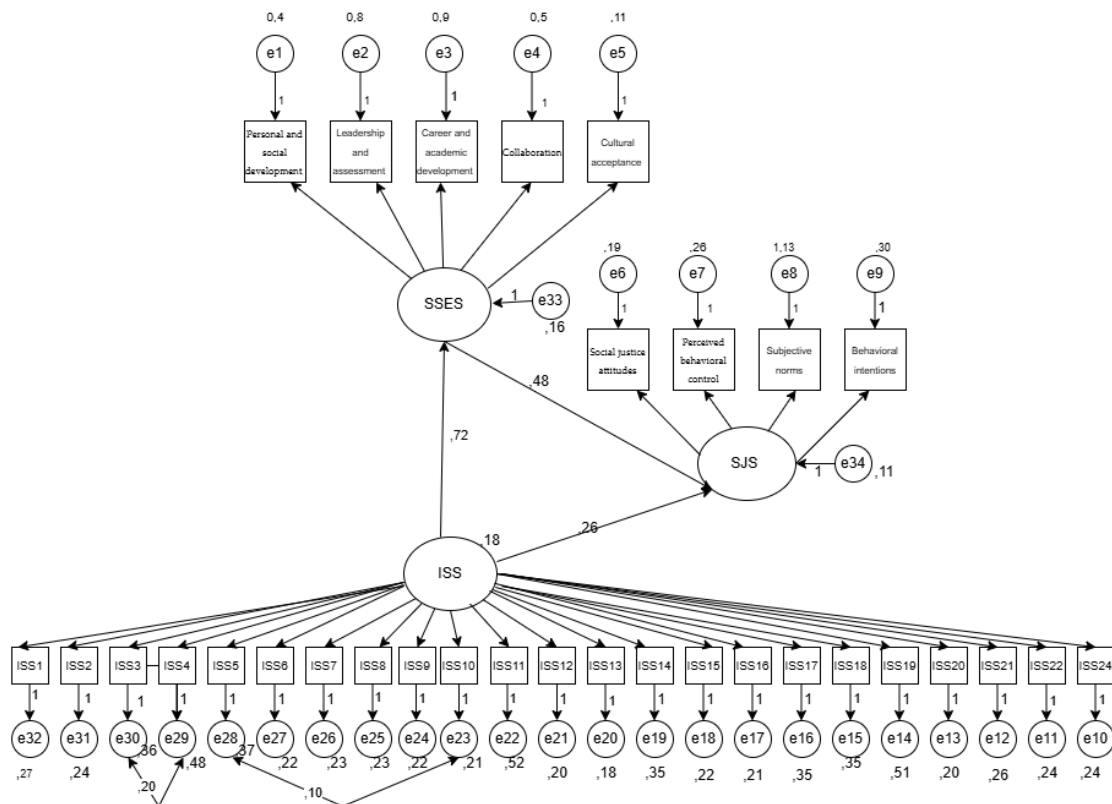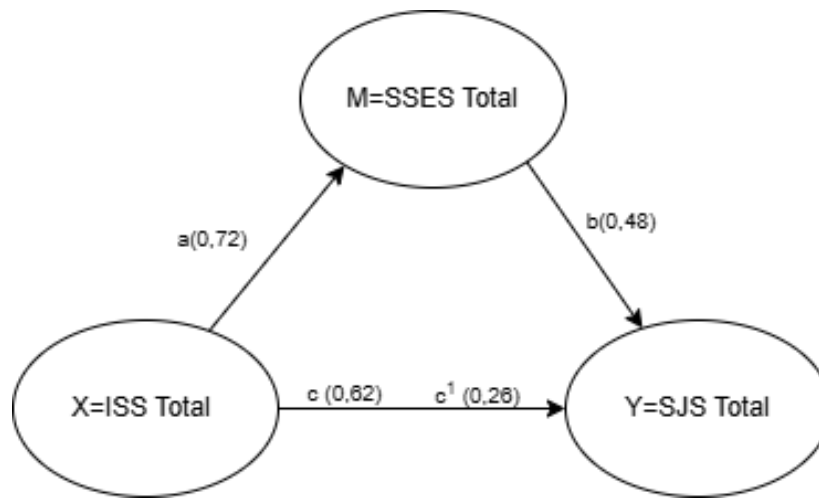**Figure 1**

Mediation Role Analysis Results

Figure 2

Path Coefficients for the Mediation Model

Figure 2 presents the mediation effects of school counselors' self-efficacy in the relationship between social justice and intercultural sensitivity levels, including paths a, b, c, and c^i. According to Figure 2, the standardized regression coefficient for path a is 0.72 (p= .00), the standardized regression coefficient for path b is 0.48 (p= .00), path c is 0.62 (p= .00) and path c^i is 0.26 (p= .00).

Table 2

Mediation Role Analysis Results

School Counselor's Self-Efficacy as a Mediator in the Relationship between Intercultural Sensitivity – Social Justice	Total Effect	Direct Effect (c)	Indirect Effect (c^i)	Bootstrap Confidence Interval	p	Type of Mediation Partial Mediation
	0.88	0.62	0.26	(0.24) - (0.50)	.00	

The direct, indirect, and total effects between variables are presented in Table-2. Based on the findings, intercultural sensitivity indirectly influences social justice through self-efficacy. In other words, self-efficacy may partially mediate between intercultural sensitivity and career development. The bootstrapping procedure was applied to evaluate the significance of indirect effects. According to bootstrapping results, the absence of the "0" value in the confidence interval (CI) indicates that the mediating role of self-efficacy is significant (p= 0.05, 95%, CI= 0.24, 0.50). Table 2 shows that intercultural sensitivity has a positive and significant total effect (β= .88) and direct effect (β= .62) on social justice (p<.05). The indirect effect of intercultural sensitivity on social justice (β= .26) decreases when self-efficacy is included in the analysis. Based on these results, it is possible to express that school counselor self-efficacy partially mediates.

Discussion

The study found a positive and significant relationship between school counselors' intercultural sensitivity and social justice levels. In other words, as school counselors' levels of intercultural sensitivity increase, their levels of social justice also tend to rise. This finding aligns with Elmalı's (2020) study, which concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between intercultural sensitivity and diversity, as well as social justice, among social service specialists. Indeed, Banks (2017) emphasized that fostering intercultural awareness in educational settings significantly contributes to the promotion of social justice. Similarly, Deardorff (2015) stated that intercultural competence enhances individuals' sense of social responsibility and justice. In this regard, school counselors who are respectful of and sensitive to different cultures are expected to adopt a more willing and effective approach in promoting social justice. It can be inferred that school counselors who are respectful and sensitive to different cultures are likely to adopt a more positive approach to promoting social justice within schools.

The study, found a positive and significant relationship between school counselors' levels of intercultural sensitivity and self-efficacy. In other words, as school counselors' levels of intercultural sensitivity increase, their levels of self-efficacy also tend to rise. This result is consistent with Bakioğlu's (2017) findings, which suggest that culturally responsive counseling competence predicts psychological counseling self-efficacy, as well as Bakioğlu and Türküm's (2019) results, indicating that taking a culturally responsive counseling course contributes to psychological counselors' self-efficacy. Similarly, Yılmaz (2024), in a study conducted with pre-service teachers, found a significant relationship between intercultural sensitivity and self-efficacy. In this context, it can be suggested that individuals who are sensitive to cultural diversity are likely to possess higher self-efficacy in addressing challenges that may arise in multicultural environments. It can be stated that school counselors who understand the characteristics of different cultures and are sensitive to the perspectives of individuals from diverse backgrounds possess the necessary competence to address problems arising from cultural diversity in schools.

The study, found a positive and significant relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy and social justice levels. In other words, as school counselors' self-efficacy increases, their levels of social justice also tend to rise. This result is consistent with the finding that self-efficacy directly and indirectly influences social justice through outcome expectations (Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011). School counselors who feel sufficient in their current roles and responsibilities are likely to engage in initiatives related to social justice, which is considered a crucial ethical responsibility for 21st-century psychologists.

This study, found that self-efficacy plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between school counselors' intercultural sensitivity and social justice. School counselors with higher intercultural sensitivity tend to have more positive attitudes toward social justice. This relationship becomes more meaningful and more substantial when mediated by school counselor self-efficacy. No studies were found in the literature explicitly examining the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and social justice.

The study concludes that school counselors' sense of self-efficacy is crucial in fulfilling their professional responsibility of promoting social justice. Additionally, the high level of self-efficacy among school counselors can be considered a critical element in effectively addressing complex areas like social justice (Cengiz, 2023). Social justice in schools involves ensuring equal opportunities and creating inclusive

policies. A school counselor adopting a social justice approach is expected to address students within their socio-cultural context, work to establish strong school-family and community collaboration, and lead efforts to combat biases (Kağnıcı, 2017). High self-efficacy levels enable school counselors to exhibit more effective behaviors in ensuring social justice. Bandura (1986) states that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to set higher goals and persist in facing obstacles. Based on this, school counselors with high self-efficacy are believed to be more inclined to recognize and take action against inequitable situations within schools. When school counselors take responsibility for creating a fair environment and encounter challenges, their level of self-efficacy plays a crucial role in determining their response. As their self-efficacy increases, the support for a just school environment will likely grow.

Despite the important findings, this study has certain limitations regarding the generalizability of the results. First, as the research was conducted without any project or funding support, data collection was limited to a single time point. Another limitation concerns the gender distribution of the sample, which was not homogeneous. The data were collected through online forms from a sample predominantly composed of women (72.0%). However, the reason for this imbalance is unknown, as participation was based on voluntary involvement and gender distribution was not controlled.

Recommendations

Evidently, self-efficacy in school counseling plays a supportive role in developing intercultural sensitivity and social justice. Integrating practical courses aimed at enhancing intercultural sensitivity into undergraduate or graduate psychology programs can help students develop the necessary skills to navigate unfair environments they may encounter in schools. Specifically, for early-career school counselors working in disadvantaged schools or those with significant ethnic diversity, supervision support and in-service training to boost self-efficacy are essential. These initiatives will enable school counselors to handle complex social justice and equity issues in school settings.

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