

Changing the spirit: A New Perspective towards Entrepreneurship and Career Policies in the Context of Therapeutic Discourse in Türkiye

Ruhları Değiştirmek:Türkiye’de Terapötik Söylemler Üzerinden Girişimciliğe ve Kariyer Politikalarına Yeni Bir Bakış

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Abstract: In Türkiye, the characteristics expected of workers have begun to change as a result of neoliberal policies such as marketization, privatization, and flexible labor practices. Young people who are part of this change have to adapt their career planning to the new market and conditions. In this process, the driving forces behind flexibility disseminate the discourses of entrepreneurship, personal development, lifelong learning, and career through institutions such as schools, universities, the media, and consultancy firms serving the business sector. When therapeutic discourse is added to entrepreneurship discourse, the spirit of Neo-liberalism emerges. This discourse constantly deals with the self, increases the self-responsible, entrepreneurial, flexible and self-centered subjectivity and tries to manage the transitions of young people with entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses. Especially in recent years, entrepreneurship and career discourses in Türkiye have been used in relation to branches of therapy that include psychological ideas and diagnoses. This article seeks to examine how entrepreneurship, career management, lifelong learning, and therapeutic approaches are integrated into the construction of an entrepreneurial self among young people, and how career building has become increasingly individualized under neoliberalism. This study, methodologically confined to a literature review, begins with a brief overview of how working life has evolved under a weak welfare regime. It is followed by a comprehensive examination of the interrelationships among the concepts of career, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and therapeutic discourse. The study aims to provide an original contribution to the field.

Key words: Neo-liberalism, Working Life, Career, Entrepreneurship, Therapeutic discourses.

Özet: Türkiye’de, Neo-liberalizmin piyasalaştırma, özelleştirme ve esnek çalışma gibi uygulamalarıyla çalışanlardan istenen özellikler değişmeye başlamıştır. Bu değişimin içinde olan gençler, kariyer planlamasını yeni piyasaya ve koşullara göre uyarlamak zorundadır. Bu süreçte, esnekliğin kurucu güçleri, okullar, üniversiteler, medya, iş dünyasına hizmet veren danışmanlık şirketleri aracılığıyla; girişimcilik, kişisel gelişim, hayat boyu öğrenme ve kariyer söylemlerini yaymaktadır. Girişimcilik söylemlerine terapötik söylemler de eklenince, ortaya devamlı benlikle meşgul olan, öz-sorumlu, girişimci, esnek ve ben-merkezci özneliği yükselten, buna paralel gençlerin geçişlerini girişimci ve terapötik söylemlerle yönetmeye çalışan *Neo-liberalizm ruhu* ortaya çıkmaktadır. Özellikle son yıllarda Türkiye’de girişimcilik ve kariyer söylemleri; psikolojik fikirler ve teşhislerin yer aldığı, terapi dallarıyla ilişkili olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu makale, girişimcilik, kariyer yönetimi, yaşam boyu öğrenme ve terapötik yaklaşımların gençler arasında girişimci bir benliğin inşasına nasıl entegre edildiğini ve kariyer inşasının neoliberalizm altında nasıl giderek daha bireysel hale geldiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, metodolojik olarak literatür taraması ile, öncelikle zayıf bir refah rejimi altında çalışma hayatının nasıl değiştiğine dair kısa bir açıklama ve ardından kariyer, girişimcilik ve yaşam boyu öğrenme kavramları ile terapötik söylem arasındaki ilişkinin derinlemesine bir incelemesiyle sınırlıdır. Çalışma, alana özgün bir katkı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Neo-liberalizm, Çalışma Hayatı, Kariyer, Girişimcilik, Terapötik söylemler.

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1. Introduction

“Who knows the world well, knows himself well”. –Friedrich Novalis

Starting from the 1990s and moving into the 2000s, new neoliberal practices emerged, characterized by privatizations and outsourcing. This shift deepened with the transition from a regime of secure, full-time employment with relatively higher wages to a contractual employment model that offers limited social benefits and protections. For youth after the 2000s, employment and work have become a point of crisis between the public and private sectors. Parallel to these transition, neoliberal practices facilitated the state’s complete withdrawal from numerous sectors, thus strengthening oligarchic capitalism. On the other hand, the persistence of close ties between political-economic decision-makers and private interests has reinforced networks of political patronage, meaning that liberalization has not resulted in a truly liberal market (Szigetvári, 2019). In many countries, right-wing parties have eroded the status of public employees. Citing the 2008 Economic Crisis, they achieved this by keeping wages low, reducing social rights, and undermining job security in the public sector.¹ (Standing, 2017). These processes, initiated through privatization and subcontracting, have deepened with the shift from a regime of full-time, secure employment to a contractual employment model that provides limited social benefits and relies on lower-wage labor. The increasing flexibility of capitalism has led to the emergence of numerous alternative options. However, this flexibility has also destabilised jobs and professions. This change has been summarised by the slogan ‘no long-term,’ as it has brought short-term employment instead of stable and long-term career paths (Sennett, 1999). As a result, young people have found themselves facing a range of unstable and insecure work conditions, including temporary jobs, peripheral work, part-time employment, subcontracting, remote work, and even unemployment. The core reason behind the crisis in working life due to flexible practices lies precisely here. The primary issue, beyond the downsizing of the public sector, concerns the quality of jobs and working conditions. In Türkiye, market flexibilization, the expansion of the private sector, privatizations, downsizing of companies, and requiring extensive work from a limited number of employees have all created barriers for young people entering the workforce. As a result of these changes, the private sector has become a market characterized by high workloads, instability, and insecurity.

Although employees seek a stable work life and regular income, employers prioritize flexibility in working hours based on demand, prefer workers capable of performing diverse tasks, and favor hiring personnel on temporary contracts and at lower wages. We observe that class conflict has now transformed into a tension between security and stability on one side, and flexibility, individualization, and freedom on the other. The discourse and practices of flexibility have permeated every area. A market-driven framework governed by the rhetoric of flexibility is being constructed, particularly in universities, in education, in personal development literature, and in the media. Questions like “Would you like to be your own boss?”, “How about earning more?”, and “Would you like to work with us?” are simple indicators of this narrative of flexibility (Demir, Yıldız & Fırat, 2020, pp. 1250-1258).

To limit or eliminate the inclination of workers, especially young people entering the job market, toward public sector employment, neo-capitalism has embarked on a multidimensional construction process. The foundational forces of flexibility now promote entrepreneurship, personal development, lifelong learning, and the allure of career building across all spheres. An emphasis is placed on an economic landscape centered around entrepreneurship, where young people can become their own CEOs and ascend the career ladder—provided they cultivate a free, self-confident, and flexible personality. When these entrepreneurial narratives are combined with therapeutic discourses, a neoliberal ethos emerges that promotes a self-focused, self-responsible, entrepreneurial, and flexible subjectivity. This ethos, in turn, seeks to manage young people’s transitions through the combined lenses of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourse (Brunila, Mertanen & Batista-Costa, 2020; Brunila & Siivonen, 2014). This ethos now acquires increased visibility, aiming to shape individuals through liberal/neoliberal inclinations. In the reorganization of employment and working life, this ethos initiates a process of continual recreation across all domains. In this process, the state actively seeks to downsize the public sector and expand the private sector, thereby fully opening the door to unregulated, unstable, and insecure forms of employment.

Based on this context, the article first examines working life that awaits young people in Türkiye following the weakening of the welfare regime and the marketization of employment due to neo-capitalist policies. It will then discuss how, beyond merely introducing flexibility into

¹ Examples of the erosion of the public sector include the protest of 40,000 police officers in Italy in 2009 demanding better pay, the rise in the average age of police officers to 45 due to hiring freezes, the protest of 50,000 public servants in Portugal in 2010 against wage freezes as the country reduced public services, and the fact that two-thirds of the new jobs created in the decade before 2008 in the United States and the United Kingdom were in the public sector (Standing, 2017, p. 95).

working life, neoliberal policies in Türkiye aim to instill flexibility within individual personalities. From this perspective, the analysis will explore how concepts like personal development, career building, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and their intersection with therapeutic discourse contribute to shaping neoliberal inclinations among young people. Finally, the article will illustrate, through specific examples, how career building and entrepreneurship function as structures of power and control, influencing the choices of young people caught between the public and private sectors. It will also examine the use of such tools, including the rising influence of therapeutic approaches, in shaping the evolving employment landscape.

2. Flexibility and Working Life in Türkiye's Weak Welfare Regime

Two critical factors that influence young people's transition into employment and their positioning within specific sectors are the welfare system and employment conditions. In Türkiye, particularly over the past 40 years, the welfare system has undergone significant transformation; citing reasons such as mass unemployment, wage declines, the informalization of labor, and insecure working conditions, there has been a shift from employment-based social security policies to social assistance policies (Yörük, 2022). In the 2000s, as economic growth was driven by the private sector, a competition-oriented state emerged, marked by privatizations and an increase in foreign capital as core elements of economic policy (Szigetvári, 2019). During this period, Türkiye began to be identified as a non-protective welfare regime model (Gallie & Paugam, 2000). This shift occurred through the state's implementation of flexible labor regulations. Measures in the 2001 emergency action plan for working life, including personnel reform, transitioned public employees to contract-based positions and introduced flexible work arrangements, performance-based pay policies, and a standardized staffing model. These regulations imposed multiple functions on employees, shaping competition, disorganization, and discrimination through individual performance and resulting in the contraction of public employment (Topak, 2012). Since this action plan, there has been a significant increase in the number of wage workers; the economic crisis in Türkiye, along with the resulting high unemployment, has forced even skilled labor to work for minimum wage, leading to a rise in the number of minimum-wage earners; at the same time, the proportion of workers in civil servant positions has declined, thereby expanding the numerical and proportional weight of the working class within employment (Yolvermez, 2020;

Mütevellioğlu & Işık, 2009).

During this process, the qualities required from employees have begun to change in line with shifts across various sectors. Young people are expected to possess attributes such as flexibility, the ability to rapidly adapt to market changes, skills for collaborative work, effective communication, swift problem-solving capabilities, and a strong awareness of their own personality traits. As a result of these economic transformations, young people are increasingly compelled to adapt their career planning to this evolving market and its conditions. As young people undergo this transformation, the market itself has taken on an increasingly complex character. The public sector's shift toward contract-based hiring, coupled with the expansion of a precarious, unstable, and demanding private sector, has plunged the labor market into a state of uncertainty and lack of control. While this situation reflects the weakening of the welfare state's role in employment and job security in Türkiye, it has also led to a "diploma-holding unemployment" problem among young people. It is noted that in this regime with minimal protection, the absence of active employment policies, combined with the limited, low-quality, and precarious nature of available jobs, negatively impacts young people's outlook on the future, exposing them to uncertainty and a particular form of vulnerability (Çelik, 2008; Lüküslü, 2020). The shared experiences of young adults in Turkey are examined from the perspectives of 'waiting' and "familialism" and are defined as the 'ruthless optimism of waiting' (Gökşen et al., 2023). For young people, "this dynamic paradoxically promotes an entrepreneurial mindset, never-ending self-enterprise, forms of cruel attachments and social dependencies., while simultaneously leaving them reliant on their families or insecure, temporary jobs to realize their aspirations for the future" (Gökşen et al., 2023, p. 2).

Under conditions of weak state welfare, precarious jobs in the private sector have increased, with women and young people occupying the majority of these roles. "In developing countries, a growing number of young people are employed in the informal economy, where there is no social protection, wages are low, and working conditions are poor; meanwhile, highly educated young people remain unemployed due to a mismatch between their university education and the employment opportunities available" (Temiz, 2004, pp. 74-75). In particular, the mismatch between university education and employment, along with the market's irregular, poor, and demanding conditions despite the desired entrepreneurial spirit, has become a deadlock for young people.

In contrast, knowledge workers—defined as an educat-

ed, professional, and specialized class that envisions a flexible and autonomous career path—tend to prefer the private sector. For these young individuals, not only employment but also job quality and workplace conditions influence their choice between the public and private sectors. These choices are shaped not only by the demands of the workplace but also by their own expectations and individual characteristics. The most common criteria cited by Generation Z when selecting a job or employer are high salary, followed by opportunities for skill development, a flexible work environment, and an employer typology that is thoughtful, empathetic, and grants autonomy and initiative to employees.

In his article titled ‘What Do Employees Want About the World and Türkiye?’ published in Turkey, the quality management system manager discusses individuals who want to work for companies that offer fair remuneration, support personal development, manage career development, provide exciting opportunities, offer ample opportunities for learning and application, enable networking, and provide proximity to management (Yıldırım, 2020). This describes precisely the “entrepreneurial personality” that, as discussed in the previous section of this study, is fostered by certain practices and policies. At the heart of the educated professional class, referred to in working life as “knowledge workers,” and their deliberate preference for the private sector is the desire for “self-management.” In a study conducted in Istanbul with 20 knowledge workers, employees who enjoy flexibility and risk-taking in their work lives criticize strict hierarchies and workplace cultures that do not grant autonomy. These liberal tendencies often lead them to voluntarily work long hours—not due to managerial compulsion but as a commitment to completing tasks or achieving high-quality results, adjusting their actions and even self-image in alignment with work life (Yılmaz Şener, 2016).

3. The Entrepreneurial Self and Individualized Career Policy

Today, with the flexible applications of Neo-liberalism, a “new personality” is sought for the growing market and individuals are designed as “entrepreneurs” and “compan[ies] of one” (Lane, 2011, s. 45). The motto of “Managing Oneself” (Drucker, 2022) and “Become the CEO of You” (Butler, 2007) encapsulates the type of worker desired by the management of neoliberal companies. This type of person is “aware of changes occurring in their environment, conscious of the necessity to adapt either personally or institutionally due to these changes, eager to benefit from the advantages that the innovation

brought by the change process offers, willing to take the risks that accompany this change, and inclined toward entrepreneurship.” (Demir et al., 2020, p. 28). This type of person forms the first step in the construction of the neoliberal subject. Four main tools stand out for cultivating this new personality: entrepreneurship, career management, lifelong learning, and therapeutic approaches. These tools demonstrate how neoliberalism transforms young people into entrepreneurial selves and individualizes career building, functioning as a mechanism of social control (Preston, 1999; Brunila, 2012; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016).

Following the prominent entrepreneurship narrative in the field of business, entrepreneurship also comes to the fore in psychological theories with personality-oriented approaches. Although social culture and environment have been shown to have an impact on entrepreneurial character traits, entrepreneurial character is primarily framed by being proactive, dynamic, purposeful, positive, taking initiative, being open to cooperation, being flexible, being creative, being resilient, and then the ability to take risks, innovation, marketing skills, and the ability to evaluate profitable opportunities. (Littunen, 2000; Casson, 1982; Caird, 1988). “Entrepreneurs who are innovative, holistic, risk-taking and have coordinated behaviour patterns is motivated to create a venture, which reflects their vision and ambitions, and is prepared to review and organise their social environment to make it materialise” (Morrison, 2000, s. 62-63). For this reason, entrepreneurship is mostly associated with personality traits today. In all these approaches, social structure and variables are ignored. This is also immediately apparent in the narratives in the textbooks taught to children and young people.² These entrepreneurial traits also stand out with personality traits and make the same statements valid for careers.

Today, entrepreneurship, career planning, and lifelong learning policies are promoted not only through the business world but also across various platforms such as schools, universities, and conferences. In Türkiye, the concept of the ‘entrepreneurial university’ is promoted as a part of solutions for economic development and unemployment prevention (Yıldız, 2019 & Telli Yamamoto, 2020). However, what stands out here is not merely the support for entrepreneurship but rather the state’s shift in its employment policy—from being a direct actor to transferring this role and responsibility to society. Additionally, the state itself has become an active representative of the entrepreneurial discourse. The “Career Planning Courses” prepared by the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Presidential Human

² The fact that in entrepreneurship textbooks taught in secondary schools in Türkiye, narratives that emphasize personality traits and a section devoted to

Resources Office serve as yet another significant example of the state's role as a direct leader in constructing the neoliberal discourse of flexibility. The course content covers topics such as career, intelligence and personality, personal traits, skills, national and international NGOs, sectors, entrepreneurship, and resume writing, while issues like unemployment, job insecurity, and low-paid intensive labor are not addressed. Emphasizing the principle of lifelong learning, the focus is on individuals' self-assessment, adaptability to new developments, and exercising freedom of choice. With an optimistic outlook, subjects who are highlighted are those capable of adapting to market conditions and handling threats and obstacles (Demir, Demir & Güner, 2023; Güldü & Ersoy Kart, 2017). "Through the discourse of career management, individuals are placed in a never-ending process of adapting to changes, competing with others and constantly trying to be "suitable" for different jobs" (Filiz, 2020, s.8). Thus, for young people, "independence" and "self-improvement" are important, alongside the belief that a fixed job and working hours do not foster personal growth; instead, they see the need to compete in the private sector to climb the career ladder. At the same time, these generations, considered pioneers in the development of the independent new economy, are planning futures centered on starting their own businesses. This trend toward independence is also referred to as the "do-it-yourself" movement, which aims to showcase one's talents. The "do-it-yourselfers," who prefer working independently and receiving all the credit and applause themselves—rather than relying on others or sharing recognition with a team—hold an important place within Generation Z. (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). For this reason, this group of young people is also referred to as "careerist youth." For them, self-improvement, independence, risk-taking, and the absence of fixed working hours and routines represent a more exciting career journey.

4. A Journey in Personality and Career Management: From Entrepreneurial Paradigms to Therapeutic Narratives

The concept of a lifelong job has become a thing of the past, replaced by a career planning narrative that prioritizes professions and skills over institutional loyalty in an era of flexibility. It is evident that loyalty no longer holds a place in the new work ethic. Considering the system's message of "no long term," it becomes nearly impossible for individuals to build a career without continually updating their skills throughout their working lives. Indeed, the market, now dominated by short-

term contracts, temporary positions, and project-based work, no longer demands long-term commitments. In this market defined by flexibility and short-termism, the values of loyalty, trust, and commitment—requiring long-term perspectives—erode and gradually withdraw from the work ethic, as individuals are swept along by its dynamics (Demir et al., 2023; Sennett, 2008). The individuals bearing the brunt of this erosion often begin to see themselves—not the policies or the system—as the source of the problem, as they lack the power to change the system. At this very moment, psychological ideas and diagnoses, along with therapeutic approaches, begin to permeate every aspect of social and cultural life, particularly in education. Programs such as life coaching, emotional literacy, and anger management, often linked to therapy-related fields, gain prominence, embedding themselves both discursively and institutionally (Brunila, 2014). In the neoliberal system, the focus has shifted away from discussing the structures of education and employment toward topics like entrepreneurship, career building, and therapeutic approaches. In this context, young people are increasingly presented with therapeutic training programs, offered alongside the entrepreneurial ethos, as services in the market. "As a discursive form of power therapisation is observed here to work by directing students to focus on their inner selves—including their problems, vulnerabilities, dependencies as well as reactions to life events—in a therapeutic mode" (Brunila & Siivonen, 2014, p.1). From a Foucauldian perspective, therapy functions as a form of power and a technology of the self. Foucault's concept of "technologies of the self" refers to the ways individuals act upon themselves in accordance with prescribed ideals. These self-technologies enable subjects to shape their bodies, minds, thoughts, and behaviors by focusing inward—either independently or with external assistance—through the relationship they cultivate with themselves rather than through external authority. This process facilitates self-transformation aimed at achieving ideals such as perfection, wisdom, and happiness (Foucault, 1982).

Within this Foucauldian framework, neoliberalism governs society by establishing governmental mechanisms and recognizable subjectivities, while therapy operates as a technology of the self that organizes individuals internally. Governmental mechanisms are examined not only within political discourse but also across philosophical, religious, medical, and pedagogical texts. Beyond state control, "government" disciplines populations through biopower in domains such as self-regulation, family and child guidance, household management, and the regulation of the soul (Foucault, 2008 &

personality traits are proof of this. See: Başar, Emine (2019). *Ortaöğretim Girişimcilik Ders Kitabı*, Ankara.

Lemke, 2001, p. 191). This form of biopower is particularly effective in regulating working life within neoliberal, low-welfare societies.

In a context where education and employment are seldom discussed, diploma-holding unemployment is on the rise, the public sector is shrinking, and fears of uselessness, anxiety, and hopelessness are increasing—along with a decline in psychological well-being—it becomes easier to steer individuals toward therapeutic approaches, entrepreneurship, personal development, and lifelong learning. Recently, programs such as life coaching, various therapy concepts, and training certification programs focusing on optimism and psychological resilience have proliferated, particularly with an orientation toward the workforce. This proliferation demonstrates how therapeutic discourse and practices have risen alongside neoliberalism in Turkey. Young people, born into liberal societies and socialized to internalize these tendencies, now aspire to become prominent actors within the dynamic structure of the private sector, rehabilitated through various programs and certifications rather than conforming to the routinized and limited structures of the public sector.

This neoliberal individual, represented in particular by Generation Z, is the focus of a research company's report examining Turkey's talent transformation until 2030 (McKinsey & Company, 2022). The report highlights traits such as flexibility, rapid adaptability to change, continuous learning and self-improvement, leadership, resilience, adaptability, problem-solving, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills. Alongside these personality traits, the variety of personal development books has expanded, with teachings intertwined with therapies like "Rumi therapy," "fairy tale therapy," and "music therapy," spreading everywhere through certifications as mechanisms of power and control. In summary, personal development books, articles, business magazines, and media ideologically contribute to the construction of individualized careers and the creation of individuals burdened with personal responsibility.

If we consider the similarities between the objectives of entrepreneurship and therapeutic education, we see that working life operates under the combined influence of these two ethical approaches. The workforce is no longer managed using traditional methods; instead, it is managed by unleashing individuals' psychological efforts towards autonomy and creativity (Brunila, 2012). The workforce is no longer managed through traditional methods but instead by unleashing individuals' psychological efforts toward autonomy and creativity. It emphasizes self-discovery and skill management, aligning

with entrepreneurship, which symbolizes freedom and creativity. For this to happen, the emergence of an autonomous self is essential, achieved through therapeutic training that liberates individuals from psychic and emotional chains. Together, the entrepreneurial ethos and the therapeutic ethos serve market interests by constructing a flexible and self-centered workforce.

Young people shaped by this ethos control their emotions and themselves, turning their identities into a project and making themselves a target, thereby attaching themselves to the market, disciplinary expertise, and its discourse as self-disciplined and entrepreneurial subjects. In doing so, they learn to internalize personal responsibility, attribute failures solely to themselves, and become individuals consumed with the self yet diminished in their sense of self (Brunila, 2012; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016). In a context where diploma-holding unemployment is on the rise, the public sector is shrinking, fears of uselessness, anxiety, and hopelessness are increasing, and psychological well-being is reported to be declining. In such a context, it becomes easier to steer individuals toward therapeutic approaches, entrepreneurship, personal development, and lifelong learning. Consequently, the rise in education programs focusing on therapeutic approaches to construct entrepreneurial individuals—along with the growing values, ideas, and practices related to these approaches and the prominence of psychological disciplines—has sparked criticism in Europe and the United States. These criticisms center on how therapeutic approaches, which are market-oriented and individualize social problems, have come to replace traditional education. The discourse of entrepreneurship—and by extension, the neoliberal order—is deeply tied to therapeutic narratives that prioritize autonomy, personalizing everything, identifying personal shortcomings and vulnerabilities, shaping self-confidence, emphasizing competition and performance, and equipping individuals to handle uncertainty and risks. Both entrepreneurship and therapeutic discourses operate alongside the neoliberal ethos, guiding the restructuring of education and employment (Brunila et al., 2020). In the realms of entrepreneurship and career building, the rise of psychological disciplines has begun to establish a framework for managing young people's entry into and mobility within the market. Youth unemployment is increasingly treated not as a societal or political issue but as an individual problem, while the state continues to expand its market-oriented policies and the private sector. For those unable to cultivate an entrepreneurial self, the implicit message is, "You're failing to adapt to the market—go discover and strengthen yourself; otherwise, you'll be among those swept away."

In Türkiye, the rise of therapeutic discourses and practices has become evident. A recent example is the increasing prevalence of training and certification programs focused on optimism and psychological resilience, specifically tailored for the workplace. These programs aim to cultivate individuals who are equipped to cope with emotional vulnerabilities, develop immunity to challenges, and take responsibility for their emotions, thoughts, and actions.

For instance, a consulting firm providing advisory services to business owners on a digital platform offers flexibility-centered recommendations under the title “Resilience Training at the Workplace in 8 Easy Steps.” The company poses the question: “Resilient individuals can bounce back and progress in their careers. However, what happens to less resilient employees?” Their response is: “The focus of resilience training should not be on constant pushing; instead, it should be about learning techniques to handle stressful situations in our daily work lives. Contrary to popular belief, resilience is not a personality trait but a discipline that everyone can learn” (“İşyeri Esneklik Eğitimi,” 2024). Another platform (<https://mutluyasam.com.tr/is-hayatinda-psikolojik-dayaniklilik-icin-8-yontem/>) proposes a set of eight strategies aimed at enhancing psychological resilience in organizational settings. These strategies include allocating personal time for self-care, fostering a positive mindset, setting achievable short-term goals, strengthening social support networks, prioritizing regular physical activity, cultivating psychological flexibility, practicing meditation and breathing techniques, and ultimately seeking professional support. The guidance is structured as a stepwise approach that culminates in professional intervention when necessary. As part of this process, the platform offers an online service package that provides personalized recommendations for psychologists, life coaches, or therapists. Another mental health support service is promoted under the slogan “Increase Your Employees’ Happiness and Productivity.” The platform provides a comprehensive range of interventions, including 24/7 access to cognitive therapy, mental health coaching, mindfulness training, and guided mindfulness meditation sessions (<https://feelwelltr.com/kurumsal>). On another digital platform (<https://tezgahcilar.com/egitim-kategori/psikoloji/>), training programs offered to employees are deeply intertwined with therapeutic discourses. The courses include: Emotional Agility Workshop in the Workplace, Recognize Yourself Through Schema Therapy, Eliminate Barriers, Agile Work: Discover Your Potential, Adapt to Change, Enhance Resilience, Entrepreneurial Thinking in Times of Crisis, The Art of Managing Yourself and Others, and Strengthen Team Communication. The platform intro-

duces its policies to individuals as follows: “The success of institutions depends on the productivity, happiness, and performance of their employees. We design training programs that focus on the psychological aspects of work life. We collaborate with psychologists who have also experienced corporate life. Our content covers topics such as stress management in work and daily life, managing hierarchical relationships, emotion regulation, and mindfulness”.

In Türkiye, as seen in the examples provided, there has been an increase in consultancy services focusing on the psychological aspects of work life. For instance, a university offering a training program titled Psychological Resilience in the Workplace markets its benefits to participants as follows: “It aims to raise awareness about how to withstand and recover from negative conditions such as work stress, burnout, excessive workload, psychological harassment, pressure, intimidation, job insecurity, layoffs, etc., and subsequently how to achieve positive work outcomes (creative performance, job satisfaction, commitment, helping behaviors, psychological empowerment, etc.)” (“İş Yaşamında Psikolojik Dayanıklılık Eğitimi,” 2024)

The importance of resilient personalities is crucial for the continuity of the market. Maintaining harmony with colleagues, not escalating conflicts, adopting constructive behaviors, and ultimately shaping greater organizational commitment while persevering and remaining tenacious are seen as pathways to achieving job satisfaction. When it is acknowledged that individuals with heavy workloads experience higher levels of burnout, psychological resilience is once again brought into play—not to reduce the workload, but to adjust perceptions of it, thereby assisting individuals in adapting to the market (Kavi & Karakale, 2018; Doğan, 2020; Onan, Turhan & Helvacı, 2021). Thus, the individual will be able to withstand all the surprises that may arise from the flexible working life. This resilience further reinforces an individualistic attitude or the “market-oriented persona,” making it particularly functional for the private sector. Examples such as “Decision Analysis and Effective Decision-Making Techniques Training,” “Emotional Literacy,” and life coaches specializing in various fields are additional indicators of the spread of these therapeutic discourses. Just as career planning, entrepreneurship, and therapeutic discourses intertwine to align with the spirit of neoliberalism, the policy of lifelong learning also serves the market. In the flexible and insecure working life introduced by the neoliberal economic regime, overcoming risks is made possible through lifelong learning activities. This produces an individual who is flexible, constantly self-renewing, equipped with certifications

in multiple fields, capable of managing and performing highly complex tasks, always employable, and burdened with taking full responsibility for everything in the process (Güllüpinar & Gökalp, 2014). In this context, lifelong learning is described as “a market-mediated mechanism of social control” and simultaneously supports the policies of neoliberalizing states by “privatization and marketization of education and training initiatives, in which it sustains policies that involve the withdrawal of the state from a range of social areas, both provision and welfare” (Preston, 1999, p. 562; C. Lima & Guimarães, 2011, p.27). In conclusion, aligned with the goals of neoliberalism, young people are increasingly becoming the targets of various policies and authorities aiming to cultivate a personality described as the “entrepreneurial self,” as noted by Kelly (2006), through mottos such as career development, personal growth, and lifelong learning. Socialized to internalize these tendencies in the context of a neo-liberal society, young people now aspire to become major actors within the dynamic structure of the private sector, rather than the routinized and limited framework of the public sector.

5. Conclusion

The article first provides a brief overview of how flexible capitalist practices have weakened the welfare regime and marketized employment in Türkiye, transforming the public and private sectors. It then examines the adjustments to the employment market aimed at favoring the private sector under new neoliberal policies. These policies reveal that the goal of neoliberalism in Türkiye is not only to neoliberalize working life but also to neoliberalize individuals themselves. The ideal employee sought by the management of neoliberal companies seeks to cultivate ideal employees who demonstrate flexibility, adaptability, and entrepreneurial spirit.

This new neoliberal ethos plays a significant role in shaping young people’s neoliberal inclinations and in planning their working lives through personal development, career building, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and therapeutic practices intertwined with these areas. Policies related to entrepreneurship, career planning, and lifelong learning operate not only through the business world but also ideologically across various platforms—particularly education, schools, universities, conferences, personal development books, articles, business magazines, media, and more—contributing to the construction of individualized careers and individuals burdened with personal responsibility.

In recent years, the rise of therapeutic discourses and practices in Türkiye has become evident, exemplified

by the growing prevalence of training and certification programs focused on life coaching, various therapy concepts, optimism, and psychological resilience, all tailored to the needs of working life. Young people, born into neoliberal societies and raised to internalize these tendencies, now aspire to become significant actors within the dynamic structure of the private sector—not through the routinized and limited framework of the public sector, but by undergoing rehabilitation through various programs and certifications. Thus, working life no longer operates through traditional management but instead by unleashing individuals’ psychological efforts toward autonomy and creativity. It is driven by self-discovery, skill management, and entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurship is implicitly and explicitly understood as a sphere for freedom and creativity.

Therapeutic discourses, central to the construction of the flexible self, align closely with the neoliberal restructuring of education and employment. This ethos has recently spread across markets and social and cultural domains in Türkiye. The rise of therapeutic discourses and practices is evident, exemplified by the increasing number of training and certification programs focused on optimism and psychological resilience, specifically tailored for the workplace. These programs aim to cultivate individuals who can cope with emotional vulnerabilities, build immunity to challenges, and take responsibility for their emotions, thoughts, and actions.

The growing prominence of therapeutic discourses in entrepreneurship and career building provides a framework for managing young people’s entry and mobility within the market. Youth unemployment and work-related issues are no longer addressed as societal or political concerns but are instead framed as individual problems.

Research Ethics

Not applicable.

Artificial Intelligence Use

The author declare that no generative artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, etc.) was used in any part of this study.

Author Contributions

The author has accepted responsibility for the entire content of this manuscript and approved its submission.

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Competing Interests

The author states no conflict of interest.

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