



Attitudes towards Psychological Help-Seeking among Preservice Primary School Teachers¹

Sınıf Öğretmeni Adaylarının Psikolojik Yardım Alma Tutumları

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of gender, grade, and previous psychological help experience on attitudes towards psychological help seeking among preservice primary school teachers. Additionally, the knowledge of participants about university counseling center was examined. Participants were consisted of 147 (110 female, 37 male) undergraduate students from one of the state universities in Turkey. Personal information form and Attitudes towards Seeking Psychological Help Scale- Shortened (ASPH-S) were used as data collection instruments. In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics, and one way analysis of variance were performed. Findings indicated that gender and grade had a significant effect on attitudes towards help-seeking whereas the effect of previous help-seeking experience did not differ significantly. Regarding the effect of gender, it was seen that females showed more positive attitudes than males. Also, most of the participants (91.2%) indicated that they did not have knowledge about university counseling center.

Keywords: Attitudes of Psychological Help-Seeking, Gender, Preservice Primary School Teachers

Öz. Bu araştırmanın ilk amacı cinsiyet, sınıf düzeyi ve geçmiş psikolojik yardım alma deneyiminin sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının psikolojik yardım alma tutumları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir. Araştırmanın bir diğer amacı da katılımcıların üniversite rehberlik ve psikolojik danışma birimi hakkında bilgi sahibi olma durumlarını incelemektir. Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinden 147 katılımcı (110 kadın, 37 erkek) araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturmaktadır. Veri toplama araçları olarak, kişisel bilgi formu ve Psikolojik Yardım Arama Tutumları Ölçeği- Kısaltılmış (APHS-S) kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde betimleyici istatistik ve tek yönlü varyans analizi uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, cinsiyet ve sınıf düzeyinin sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının psikolojik yardım alma tutumları üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olduğunu gösterirken, geçmiş psikolojik yardım alma deneyiminin ise psikolojik yardım alma tutumları üzerinde anlamlı bir fark oluşturmadığını göstermiştir. Cinsiyetin etkisi incelendiğinde kadın katılımcıların erkek katılımcılara göre psikolojik yardım almaya ilişkin tutumlarının daha olumlu olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğunun (%91,2) üniversite rehberlik ve psikolojik danışma ünitesi hakkında bilgi sahibi olmadıklarını görülmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Psikolojik Yardım Alma Tutumları, Cinsiyet, Sınıf Öğretmeni Adayları

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INTRODUCTION

University students are in a stressful life period not only for educational reasons but also for developmental issues. They experience new anxieties, positive feelings and confusions in their life which are special for this life period (Arnett, 2004). Most of the young adults make important choices during this stage affecting their later life such as starting a career, transition from education to work, starting a close romantic relationship or family, and joining a social group (Arnett, 2000; Fincam & Cui, 2011). Regarding these information, it can be seen that university life is a period for students that includes many developmental tasks to accomplish and changes to adapt. In order to deal with these problems, students usually prefer to get help both professional (counselor, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist) and unprofessional (family, friends, teachers, etc.) resources (Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya & Terzi, 2012; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013).

Psychological help-seeking is a kind of formal help-seeking behavior when an individual faces with problems situations and lives psychological distress (Rickwood et al. 2005; Wong, 1997). Attitude towards psychological help-seeking is also defined as cognitive, emotional and behavioral tendencies of an individual to apply for professional help when dealing with psychological distress or needs it (Kushner & Sher, 1991). In the literature, these tendencies are classified as “positive” or “negative” (Fischer & Turner, 1970; Türküm, 2004).

According to literature, attitudes towards psychological help-seeking are studied with many variables such as social support (Çebi, 2009) loneliness (Topkaya, 2014) among university students. Gender and previous psychological help-seeking experience are mostly studied demographic variables (Çebi, 2009; Irkörücü, 2012; Kaya, 2015). In these studies, gender and previous psychological help-seeking experiences are found as effective variables on attitudes towards psychological help-seeking. Regarding gender, studies showed that females have more positive attitudes than males. Having a previous experience of psychological help is also found effective to have a positive attitude towards psychological help-seeking.

Having a positive attitude towards psychological help-seeking is also important for preservice primary school teachers since they have crucial role in educational system. The importance for primary school teachers can be explained with two aspects: themselves and their students. Firstly, it is important for them because preservice teachers should be able to get benefit from psychological services for their own needs when they need guidance. By this way, they can be able to fulfill their potentials. Secondly, it is important for their future students, since primary school teachers are role models for their students. These students are in the beginning of their life and open to new messages. It is well documented in the psychology literature that their attitudes and values are mostly shaped in this period via interaction with significant others such as teacher, family members etc. (Erikson, 1968). In order to give positive messages about psychological help-seeking behavior, primary school teachers should behave in positive manner.

In Turkey, most of the universities have university counseling centers and these centers are mostly located in Health Service Units of the campus. Any student who feels stuck or need guidance not only for serious mental illness but also for developmental problems can get benefit from these centers with free of charge. However, the amount of students getting help from these centers is limited. Studies showed that having a positive attitude towards psychological help-seeking facilitates the help-seeking behavior when a person is in need (Erkan, Cihangir-Çankaya, Terzi & Özbay, 2011). Therefore, it is important to determine the factors influencing attitude towards psychological help-seeking and having the knowledge about university counseling center.

In the literature, attitudes toward psychological help-seeking are studied with different age groups such as university students (Çebi, 2009; Topkaya, 2014; Türküm, 2005), preservice teachers (Kaya, 2015; Meydan & Lüleci, 2013), high school students (Yıldırım, Atlı & Çitil, 2014) and adults (Serim & Cihangir-Çankaya, 2016). However, studies focusing on primary school teachers' attitudes towards psychological help-seeking are sparse. With the reasons given above, current study aims to determine factors influencing attitudes towards psychological help-seeking of primary school teacher. Moreover, the present study aims to examine how well known university counseling unite by preservice primary school teachers.

METHOD

The present study is designed as causal-comparative research. In causal-comparative researches, the cause or consequences of differences between variables are investigated (Frankel & Wallen, 2006).

Participants

The population of the study is Primary School Preservice Teachers. The participants of this study were consisted of Primary School Preservice Teachers from a state university in Turkey using convenience sampling procedure. For data collection, 151 students were reached in spring semester of 2014-2015 academic year. However, four participants who did not fill out most of the questions were excluded from the study. After the data cleaning procedure, 147 participants were remained as sample of the study. Of the 147 participants, 110 (74.8%) were female and 37 (25.2%) were male. 91.2 % of the participants indicated that they did not have knowledge about university counseling center, whereas 8.8% of them indicated that they have.

Instruments

Personal Information Form: In personal information form which is developed by the researcher, participants were asked to define their gender, grade, previous experience of psychological help and having information about university counseling center.

Attitudes towards Seeking Psychological Help Scale- Shortened (ASPH-S): ASPH-S (Türküm, 2004) is the short form of the Attitudes towards Seeking Psychological Help Scale which was developed by researcher and measures the attitudes of individuals about getting psychological help. It is a 5 point Likert type rating scale including 18 items and explaining 52% of the variance. Higher scores indicate positive attitudes towards psychological help-seeking. APHS-S has two dimensions with .92 Cronbach alpha coefficients for positive views, and .77 for negative views. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the total scale was found as .90.

In the current study, reliability of the RAS was obtained by Cronbach Alpha coefficient which found as .88 and indicates high internal consistency (Frankel & Wallen, 2006). In order to analyze data, total scores for the ASPH-S were used.

Procedure

Before collecting the data, permission was guaranteed to conduct the study. Data was gathered from volunteer students in classroom settings after they were informed about purpose of the study. Participants completed the scales approximately in 15 minutes. Data was analyzed by using t-test and One-Way ANOVA and as a criterion for statistical significance; alpha level was chosen .05 for all the analyses in the study.

RESULTS

In order to get a better understanding of the features of the sample, descriptive statistics were investigated firstly. After controlling for the sufficient assumptions, One way- ANOVA was performed to analyze the research questions of the study.

Descriptive Statistics

In this step, frequencies and percentages were examined firstly. As it is presented in Table 1., it can be seen that female students (% 74.8) constitute the majority of the participants. Of the participants, only 15% had an experience of psychological help before. Moreover, most of the participants (91.2%) did not have any knowledge about university counseling unite. Regarding these information, it can be interpreted that participants of the study were not very related with psychological help-seeking processes before.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics of the study variables (N=147)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>(f)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
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Gender		
Female	110	74.8
Male	37	25.2
Grade		
Freshmen	46	31.3
Sophomore	46	31.3
Junior	26	17.7
Senior	29	19.7
Previous Psychological Help-Seeking Experience		
Yes	22	15
No	125	85
Knowledge about University Counseling Unite		
Yes	13	8.8
No	134	91.2

Mean and standard deviation of the attitudes towards psychological help-seeking scale is presented in Table 2. According to Table 2, it can be said that the total sample reported moderate levels of positive attitude ($M = 70.64$, $SD = 10.75$).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the APHS-S ($N=147$)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Possible Range</i>	<i>Actual Range</i>
Female	72.41	9.50	18-90	39-90
Male	65.41	12.57	18-90	42-89
Total	70.64	10.75	18-90	39-90

In order to determine the effects of gender, grade and previous psychological help-seeking experience, One-Way ANOVA was conducted separately. Before conducting analysis, assumptions of the ANOVA were checked and it was seen that there was not any violation of the assumptions.

To begin with main analyses, the effect of gender was analyzed. Results revealed that gender significantly affected attitudes towards psychological help-seeking [$F(3, 143) = 8.97$, $p < 05$]. Regarding means scores of the groups in Table 2, it can be seen that female participants have more positive attitudes than male participants.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA table of gender

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Gender	2674.88	3	891.62	8.97*
Error	14206.72	143	99.34	
Total	16881.60	146		

* $p < .05$

In order to determine the effect of grades, One-Way ANOVA was performed. Results revealed that grade significantly differ on attitudes towards psychological help-seeking among participants, [$F(1, 145) = 12.68$, $p < 05$]. Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the mean score for freshmen ($M=75.00$, $SD=9.26$) was significantly different from sophomores ($M=67.98$, $SD=11.43$) and seniors ($M=64.52$, $SD=8.95$) and the mean score for juniors ($M=74.50$, $SD=9.43$) was significantly different from Seniors ($M=64.52$, $SD=8.95$).

Table 4. One-way ANOVA table of grade

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
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Grade	1358.09	1	1358.09	12.68*
Error	15523.51	145	107.05	
Total	16881.60	146		

* $p < .05$

The effect of previous psychological help-seeking experience on attitudes towards psychological help-seeking is also analyzed with using One-Way ANOVA. The ANOVA was not significant, $[F(1, 145) = .88, p > .05]$. It is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA table of previous psychological help-seeking experience

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Previous Psy.				
Help Exp.	102.46	1	102.46	.88**
Error	16779.13	145	115.71	
Total	16881.60	146		

** $p > .05$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section findings will be discussed with relevant literature, suggestions will be made for future studies. In the current study, the effect of gender, grade and previous psychological help-seeking experience was investigated as first. Then, preservice primary school teachers' knowledge about university counseling unit of the campus was examined.

According to findings, gender was found a significant variable for attitudes towards psychological help-seeking in preservice primary school teachers. Female participants showed more positive attitudes than male participants. This finding is consistent with the relevant literature. There are several studies found the same results (Biddle, Gunnell, Sharp & Donovan, 2004; Topkaya, 2014; Türküm, 2005). According to Türküm (2005) this finding can be explained by gender roles in the society. With respect to gender roles (Dökmen, 2016) it is acceptable for women to show her feelings and needs in the society; however males usually receive messages to hide their feeling inside. Therefore, it was expected that females have a tendency to report higher positive attitudes.

Grade was another significant variable of the study where freshmen participants have the highest scores of attitudes towards psychological help-seeking. This finding is consistent with a study conducted with preservice teachers (Kaya, 2015). In that study, a negative correlation between age and attitudes towards psychological help-seeking was found. Kaya (2015) explained this finding with several factors such as social desirability bias etc.

In the current study, the effect of previous help seeking experience on attitudes towards psychological help-seeking was insignificant. However, this result is inconsistent with literature. In most of the studies, previous psychological help-seeking experience was found a significant variable on attitudes towards psychological help-seeking. In these studies, individuals who have a psychological help-seeking experience demonstrate more positive attitudes towards psychological help-seeking (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001; Çebi, 2009; Kaya, 2015; Topkaya, 2014). An explanation to this finding can be drawn from means score of the APHS-S and participants' education level. As it is mentioned in findings, the sample showed moderate level of positive attitudes ($M = 70.64, SD = 10.75$). Besides, preservice primary school teachers are told about the importance of psychological help process and its professionalism in their curriculum starting from the first year. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the sample of the present study has already have positive attitudes and it is not affected by previous experiences. Moreover, the number of the previous experiences can also be a factor for this result. In other words, participants of the present study are mostly consisted of those who did not apply a psychological help before. Hence, because of the numbers of participants' previous psychological help-seeking experiences are limited,

participants can not be able to make a judgment based on their previous experiences, which in turn, they could be not affected from this factor.

One of the considerable finding of this study is about preservice primary school teachers' knowledge of university counseling unit. Participants who have not any knowledge about the university counseling unit in campus constitute the majority of the sample (91.2%). When considering this finding with the amount of the university students apply to university counseling services, it seems meaningful , since the number of the university students who prefer to get psychological help from these center are very low (Erkan et al., 2011). On the other hand, this finding is surprising regarding its context. In other words, since in orientation programs which are conducted in the first weeks of the academic year, the participants of the current study are given information about university health center and university counseling like as other academic information.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study is limited with the participants consist of preservice primary school teachers from a state university of Turkey. Therefore, generalizability of the findings is limited with this study.

In the light of this understanding, several recommendations for future studies can be offered. First recommendation for future studies is to conduct new studies with large samples and different backgrounds such as participants who are working as teachers can be beneficial to understand factors associated with attitude towards psychological help-seeking in different samples.

Secondly, performing longitudinal studies may be efficacious to determine the change in attitude towards psychological help-seeking of preservice teachers.

Lastly, in order to attract attention of students to university counseling unit, using social media, in addition to orientation programs, giving brochures to students in the middle of the semester could be beneficial to reach more students.

Conclusion

In this study, factors influencing attitudes towards psychological help-seeking among preservice primary school teachers were investigated. Gender and grade was found as significant variable, whereas previous help-seeking experience was not. Parallel to the literature, female participants showed more positive attitudes than males. Moreover, results revealed that 91.2%.of the participants indicated they did not have knowledge of university counseling unite. These findings suggest that preservice primary school teachers should be given more information about university counseling service and its working policies.

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