

Does Basic Empathy Predict Counselors' Career Adaptability

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Abstract: *Empathy is a therapeutic condition, a part of the personality, and a skill. Also empathy plays a crucial role in career success and career development process. It is mostly known that empathy predicts the effectiveness of psychological counseling process. However, it is less known that its predictor role on counselors' career development. Using a sample of 279 counselors, this study examined the relationship between empathy and career adaptability. The counselors who participated in the study answered the "Career Adaptability Scale" and "Basic Empathy Scale". The research data were analyzed through correlation and multiple regression technics. The results showed a positive correlation between empathy, of which sub-dimensions are cognitive and affective empathy, and career adaptability. Also, multiple regression analysis indicated that cognitive empathy explained approximately 10% of the variance of career adaptability and that affective empathy had not a predictive role on career adaptability. For career researchers, these results showed the importance of empathy to predict counselors' career adaptability.*

Keywords: career adaptability, empathy, psychological counselors, career development

1. Introduction

1.1. Career Adaptability

For meeting oncoming workplace requirements in the middle of the twenty-first century, it must be given priority to the development of the skills of adaptability in the workforce^[1]. Super and Knasel (1981, p. 195)^[2] have declared that "from a theoretical standpoint, adults differ fundamentally from adolescents in that they are engaged in the world of work, whereas adolescents' experience of work is fragmentary and largely anticipatory". This statement implies that adolescent need information sources for clarification of their perspective to the business world. Career adaptability was described by Rottinghaus, Day, and Borgen (2005)^[3] as "a tendency affecting the way an individual views and his or her capacity to plan and adjusting to changing career plans" (p. 11). According to these definitions, career adaptability is a combination of attitudes and is having competencies to accommodate with changing work situations and to respond increasing demands of work by making appropriate career choices.

Career adaptability, a crucial construct according to developmental perspective (Savickas, 1997)^[4], comprises four dimensions of concern, curiosity, confidence, and consultation. First, concern means preparing to career options and to tasks in the future and having a time perspective. Second, control is defined as a sense of control and a belief one's responsible for shaping own career. Third, curiosity is to interest in possible selves and career opportunities by exploring the social environment such as searching the information resources. Lastly, confidence means that the person can achieve the choices to construct their career^[5,6]. When people experience some career crisis,

career translations, and handicaps, these four adaptabilities prompt them to cope with the challenges and to adjustment the transition process^[6].

Mentioned above four career adaptability dimensions are interrelated^[7], and also career adaptability which is the combination of these and some career variants is regarded as a vital construct in career development. People with higher adaptability have more chances of finding a new job^[8], have more career satisfaction^[9,10]. Also, they experience less work stress^[10] and acquire more career success^[11,12]. Career adaptability provides to people to more adjust to their environment and contribute their employment^[13]. Also one's personality supposed to be in harmony with him/her occupational choices or demands^[14,15]. Last of all, these researches findings proved that career adaptability is a crucial factor affecting on career development and a concept which worthies to research.

1.2. Empathy and Career Development

A remarkable amount career researches and practitioners give attention to the important of emotions on career success. Many of them particularly researched and proved that empathy, the ability of understanding another persons' emotions and giving an affective respond to them^[16], produces some desirable outcomes on organizations^[17].

Hoffman (1987)^[18] explains that empathy is a multidimensional concept occurring cognitive and emotional contents. Also, the author defines the cognitive dimension as awareness of another's emotional state and the emotional dimension as to notice the feelings of others and expresses its to them. Dokmen (1994)^[19] categorizes empathy in two dimensions: emphatic tendency and emphatic skills. While

empathic tendency refers to individuals' potential (capacity) to offering empathy, emphatic skills is showing empathy to another's situations. Emphatic tendency is related to attitudes, affective characteristics, and personality; emphatic skills are linked to cognitive characteristics and skills^[19]. Therefore, it can be said that classifications of empathy have emphasize on its cognitive and affective aspects.

Having empathy skill and communicating with empathic attitudes provide some yields to individuals specifically to leaders; such as career success^[20], higher level performance^[21], and career advancement potential^[22]. For example, the managers acting with emphatic concern to staff have less risk limiting or stalling his/her career. Also, the findings based on an international study demonstrated that the managers, whom their staffs reported that their manager acts emotional, are perceived as better performers^[21]. Law, Meijers, and Wijers (2002)^[23] declared that developing a career identity is equal to learning process including some individual challenges such as figuring out own feelings, describing experiences in one's own, and distinguishing between self and other. In this regard, career identity pertains recognizing and expressing own feelings and differentiating self from others empathy, so it includes general empathy concept.

Some of the studies demonstrated that empathy affected many career behaviors and constructed the indirect relationships between empathy and career processes. For example, the researchers considering that empathy is an indicator and a part of emotional intelligence investigated emotional intelligence. Besides, according to Salovey and Maley, (1990)^[24] emotional intelligence is the ability to effectively regulate self and others' emotions. For prompting career success, it should be focused on emotional intelligence and particularly be advanced to the ability of showing empathy^[25]. Results from a longitudinal study carried out by Amdurer, Boyatzis, Saatcioglu, Smith, and Taylor, 2014 (2014)^[20] have supported that emotional intelligence predicts career satisfaction and career success. Additionally, emotional intelligence is link with career adaptability^[26], occupational self-efficacy^[27], career commitment^[28], and career decision^[26,29,30]. Also, agreeableness as a personality trait equals to empathy and agreeableness has an impact on career decision difficulties^[31]. So, indicating empathic rooting from emotional intelligence is a source for professional competence and belief oneself. Briefly, sensitivity to emotions makes individuals softly to understand others and makes them more successful in their careers in the long term.

1.3. The Role of Empathy for Counselors

Psychological counselors frequently cite empathy while defining their career identify^[32]. This situation has drawn attention to empathy as a part of the counselors' occupational perceptions. Empathy as a therapeutic condition contributes to improving the therapeutic alliance, helps the clients' self-disclosure, and prompts them to focus

on the problem^[33]. Besides, some researches proved that empathy strongly predicts the effectiveness of psychological counseling^[34, 35]. Although empathy has a favorable effect on counseling process, it causes to altruism and burnout for counselor^[37,38]. Overall, it can be said that psychological counselors' think empathy as a component of professional identity and their career development process.

1.4. Purpose of The Present Study

Mentioned before, empathy, a therapeutic condition (Corey, 2008)^[33], is a determinant of counseling outcomes^[34, 35, 36] and also has shaped the counselor's career process^[32, 37, 38]. We previously explained that some findings have pointed out the indirect relationship between empathy and various career concepts such as career success, work performance and career decision. These researches have investigated the indirect relationship between empathy and career development by focusing on the leaders or the other stuffs; but little research has investigated whether or not empathy have effected to counselors' career process^[32, 37, 38]. For this reason, we examined the predictive strength of empathy on counselors' career adaptabilities, based on the idea that empathy is a significant component of counseling process and counselors' career development process.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This research aims to assign empath and career adaptability levels among psychological counselors' and to determine the relationships between basic empathy levels and career adaptability levels of counselors, therefore, it was used the correlational research design^[39].

2.2. Study Group

Study group of this study was 279 psychological counselors who have worked in a public school for one year and long time at Turkey. There were 78 men (28 %) and 201 women (72 %). Judgmental sampling technics were used to determine the participants of the research. Psychological counselors were selected according to two criteria: willingness to involve the study and having been worked in a public school.

2.3. Instrument

Basic Empathy Scale (BES): Jolliffe and Farrington (2006)^[40] developed Basic Empathy Scale and Topcu, Baker, and Capa-Aydin (2010)^[41] conducted its adaptation, validation, and reliability studies. The scale occurs of twenty items and two dimensions (cognitive and affective empathy). In this study, the reliability of the scale was examined using the internal consistency. The internal consistency coefficient of cognitive empathy is 0.80 and the internal consistency coefficient of affective empathy is 0.76. Also, to test the validation of the BES was utilized construct validity. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis showed that the goodness values were as follows, GFI = .90, AGFI = .87, and RMSEA = .06. In this study, Cronbach's alpha

coefficients were .85 for cognitive empathy dimension and .80 for affective empathy dimension. Also, the item-total correlation coefficients were .84.

Career adaptability scale (CAS): Eryılmaz and Kara (2016)^[42] was developed the CAS to evaluate the career adaptability in Turkish university students. They also conducted to the validation and reliability studies. The scale consists of 10 items scored on a five-point Likert scale and two dimensions which are career exploration and career planning. Career planning is related setting career goals, struggling for career goals and making a career plan. Career exploration has comprised to exploration self and exploration environment by considering to own career process^[42, 43]. For the validity study of the scale, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were carried out. The exploratory factor analysis indicated that the CAS explained 55.87 % of the variance. The confirmatory factor analysis supported to two-dimensional construct and yielded the following reasonable goodness values: chi-square (70.75, $N = 279$) = XX, $X^2/df = 2.08$, $p < .05$; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA .071; NFI = .95; NNFI = 0.97, IF = .98; GFI = 0.94, AGFI = 0.90. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be .89 for career exploration and .80 for career planning, and .89 for in total of scale.

2.4. Data Analysis

Firstly, by using preliminary analyses, the researchers proved that the conditions of normal distribution were satisfied. Then, they tested the relationship between the variances of empathy and career adaptability through Pearson Moment Correlation. To evaluate the prediction

strong of the variants, they utilized the linear regression analysis. More specific details about the data analysis have presented at the findings title.

3. Findings

3.1. Findings of preliminary statistical analysis

Before performing to the multi regression analysis, we checked normal distribution and auto-correlation. Firstly, skewness and kurtosis values were examined to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Skewness values were -0.5 for cognitive empathy, -0.4 for affective empathy, and -0.1 for total empathy; -0.9 for career exploration, -0.6 for career planning, and -0.8 for total career adaptability. Curtosis values were -0.9 for cognitive empathy, 0.8 for affective empathy and -0.3 for total empathy; 1.4 for career exploration, 0.8 for career planning and 1.4 for total career adaptability. Consequently, skewness and kurtosis values proved that the data were normally distributed^[44]. Secondly, through Durbin-Watson test oto correlation was examined. The values of Durbin-Watson was 1.06. Field (2013)^[45] has stated that Durbin-Watson values should not be lower than 1 and higher than 3. Oto correlations were not detected because Durbin-Watson was 1.06 in this study. After preliminary analysis, we conducted to the pearson moment correlation to evaluate the relationships between the variables. Finally, we performed the multi regression to determine the predictive power of empathy on career adaptability.

Firstly, descriptive statistics, the means, and standard deviations of the variables, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and correlations between basic empath and career adaptability of counselors' (N=279).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1. Cognitive Empathy	39.16	4.45	–				
2. Affective Empathy	40.98	6.57	.345**	–			
4. Total Empaty	80.15	9.12	.737**	.889**	–		
4. Career Exploration	22.98	4.72	.346**	.147*	.275**	–	
5. Career Planning	14.55	3.20	.260**	.105	.202**	.621**	–
6. Total Career Adaptability	37.54	7.17	.344**	.144*	.272**	.937**	.856**

InTable 1, it was observed that the means of counselors' affective empathy scores were higher than the means of their cognitive empathy scores. Besides, the means of counselors' career exploration scores were higher than the means of their career planning scores. The correlations between basic empath and career adaptability scales demonstrated a significant (at $p < .05$) moderate positive correlations among subscale of cognitive empathy and subscales of career exploration which is a dimension of career adaptability scales. As cognitive empath scores increase, career exploration levels rise, too. There were also a low level significant positive correlations between cognitive empathy and career planning. The rising of cognitive empathy levels of counselors has caused the rising of career planning levels. Higher affective empathy, another dimension of basic empathy scales, is significantly low level related to career exploration. Higher affective empathy levels were positively influenced career exploration.

The relationships between counselors' career adaptability levels and the total points of basic empathy scale dimensions of cognitive empathy and the dimension of affective empathy were analyzed through the multi-regression technique. Multi regression analysis were showed in Table 2.

Table 2: Multi regression analyses examining the predictive power of basic empathy on career adaptability

<i>Career Adaptability</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	15.16	3.84		3.94	.00
Cognitive Empathy	.53	.09	.33**	5.55	.00
Affective Empathy	.03	.06	.02	.04	.06
n=279, R= .34, R2= .11, F=18.69, $p < .01$ **, $p < .05$ *					

The results seeming in Table 1 point the significant relationship between basic empathy and career adaptability. Cognitive empathy was the most crucial variable predicting career adaptability ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 5.55$, $p < 0.01$). Cognitive empathy accounted for 11% of the variance of the career

adaptability. In addition, affective empathy did not give significant association with career adaptability $\beta = 0.02$, $t = 0.04$, $p > 0.05$).

5. Discussion

In this study, we investigated the links between counselors' basic empathy level and career adaptability. Analysis results proved that higher level empathy pointed higher level career adaptability among counselors.

There are some researches which focus on empathy and career development. In example, Gentry Gentry, Clark, Young, Cullen, and Zimmerman, (2015)^[22] found that the leaders with empathic concern negatively affecting empathy skills, may have less the ability to career progress. The researchers emphasized that emphatic skills are an affective factor on career development process. So, they stated that empathic concern should be diminished among leaders and that the leaders should be supported to improve their empathic skills. Also, Law et al., (2002)^[23] stated that not being aware emotions and not indicating to experiences are the handicaps on development of vocational identify. Besides, the more a person gets emphatic responds from family and friends, the more he or she explores himself/herself by gaining self-confidence. Also, if individuals do not be appreciated and not be approved, they have difficult to express himself/herself, so they cannot express themselves on the work environment^[46].

Unlike the previous research which have focused on the effects of empathy on general career process and the general groups like leaders and staff, this research has focused on a particular group (counselors) and a particular career development issue (career adaptability). Because of the research focused on the empathy level and the career adaptability levels of the psychological counselors', it may have contributed to the literature.

This research showed the positive correlation between empathy levels and career adaptability levels among psychological counselors. When we reviewed the researches examining the link between career adaptability and empathy, we observed that there was no research finding which investigated the direct relationship between empathy and career adaptability, but there were some studies which investigated the indirect relationship between them. Therefore, we commend the researches which contained the relationships between empathy and career adaptability. These researches may be separated to three categories: emotional intelligence, personality traits and counseling skills. First category has included the researches which considered emotional intelligence including empathy. For an example, a research made by Merino-Tejedor, Hontangas, and Petrides (2018)^[26] proved that as perceived emotional intelligence levels have risen, career adaptability levels have improved, too. The researches in second category focused the empathy as a personality trait^[12, 47, 48, 49]. In the last category, there was some researches stating that empathy is a counseling skill and also vocational skill improving career success for doctors^[50]. In sum, these researches findings proved the indirect associations between empathy with career adaptability and supported our research findings

which represented the correlation between empathy and career adaptability.

Our research has demonstrated that the rising of counselors' basic empathy level increased their career adaptability levels. This finding is important to the link between empathy and psychological counseling as a vocation. That empathy is a skill that completely shaping career development of counselors^[22]. At a research by conducted Machorro and Suck (2014)^[32] asked psychological counselors to define their professions. So, counselors usually used the concept of empathy. In addition to, the psychological counselor with higher level empathy behaves more sincerely, more tolerantly, and more consistently to clients. Former meta-analysis results proved that empathy predicts the effectiveness of counseling^[34, 35]. Therefore, the research findings can be implicated with two ways. Firstly, the counselors which attend may have believed to be more empathic required by the counseling profession because the counselor education pointed out that empathic is the most convenient approach for clients. So, they may have answered the scales by considering this perspective. In this situation, that the counselor with higher level empathy have scores higher level career adaptability may be expected. Also, the participants may have observed themselves gain empathic tendency through gaining vocational experiences. Second implication supports the first. Former empirical research findings have occurred that empathy predicts the effectiveness of counseling. Therefore, the counselors advancing own counseling career may have acquired the raising of empathic levels. Thus, this rising may have result in the development of career attachment and of career adaptability. The former longitudinal researches focus on the chancing between empathy and career adaptability among counselors in time may have occurred the links between two concepts.

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