

Full Length Research Paper

Self efficacy as a predictor of compassion satisfaction, burnout, compassion fatigue: A study on psychological counselors

Hasan Bozgeyikli

Erciyes University, Faculty of Education, Kayseri (TURKEY). E-mail: hbozgeyikli@erciyes.edu.tr.

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The aim of this study is to reveal the relationship between psychological counselors' levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout and compassion fatigue and their perception of self-efficacy with regard to multidirectional roles and skills (MRS). The sample of the study is composed of 142 school psychological counselors. In order to collect the research data, the study used personal information form, life quality scale for workers, and school counselor competency expectation scale. In terms of the analysis of the research data, in order to determine whether or not there is any direct relationship between variables, the study calculated the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. This was followed by the application of the direct multiple regression analysis technique to the data. The findings of the data showed that, there is a positive relationship between perceptions of self-efficacy with regard to the skills of psychological counseling and multidirectional roles, skills and compassion satisfaction; and that there is a negative relationship between burnout and compassion fatigue. The results of the regression analysis, on the other hand, revealed that psychological counseling skills (PCS) and perceptions of self-efficacy as to MRS significantly predicted compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue; and that fatigue is not a significant predictor.

Key words: Psychological counselors, self-efficacy, compassion satisfaction, burnout, compassion fatigue.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological counseling is one of the professions serving human beings and having an utmost importance. As a result of constant changes taking place in social life, expectations from school psychological counseling—widely acclaimed as a developing and spreading profession in Turkey—and those who perform this profession are continuously changing as well. It is crucial that counselors who perform the service of psychological counseling and guidance at schools have competency both in terms of knowledge and skill and their personal qualities (Eisenberg and Delanay, 1993). However, the capability of school psychological counselors to

adequately perform their duties is affected negatively by both the uncertainties they experience in their roles and responsibilities, and their having to deal with or being compelled to deal with activities that are irrelevant to psychological counseling and guidance (Baker, 2001). Factors such as the negative attitudes of school administrators, inconvenient environment, being invested in inadequate trust, negative attitudes towards receiving psychological help, and having poor education in the profession also affect the performance of psychological counselors in a negative way. Such a situation decreases the level of compassion satisfaction of school psychological counselors and can cause them to experience an intense burnout.

The concept of burnout was first coined by Freudenberger and entered the psychological health literature in 1974 (Freudenberger, 1975). The concept of "burnout" was later defined by Maslach and Jackson

Abbreviations: **SCCES**, School counselor competency expectation scale; **PCS**, psychological counseling skills; **MRS**, multidirectional roles and skills.

(1981) as individuals' depersonalization towards others due to their job, their feeling of emotional exhaustion, and as a syndrome that presents itself as a decrease in individual's feeling of personal accomplishment and adequacy. Maslach and Jackson (1981) asserted that burnout has three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. One of the most important reasons for psychological counselors to experience emotional exhaustion is counselors' involvement in counselee's life and solution to his/her problems more than what the role of psychological counseling requires. Building close and strong relationships with counselors is one of the factors that trigger this situation (Rizzolo, 2007). One of the frequent problems within this scope is called compassion fatigue. The emotional state that the individual experiences as a result of his/her exposition to a stressful event due to his/her profession is called compassion fatigue. After listening to a traumatic event that the counselee experiences, the process of compassion, which aims to perceive the properties and strength of a traumatic event, causes the listener to be affected by the process and this is called compassion fatigue (Stamm, 2005). Although compassion fatigue and the resultant burnout reduces the quality of the aid service that counselors render to their counselees (Maslach, 2003; Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001; Sheffield, 1999), there are very few studies that treat compassion fatigue and burnout levels as their subject. On the other hand, the studies examining the burnout levels of psychological counselors and related factors focus mostly on environmental factors such as contact duration with the counselee (Reed, 1977), heavy workload, lack of time, and not being able to be a part of the administration (Minahan, 1980). Perception of self-efficacy, one of the individual factors that might be related to burnout, is not a matter of consideration. According to Cherniss (1993), however, burnout is a function of perceived professional self-efficacy; and as one's belief in and view of his/her self-efficacy move towards the negative, the probability of experiencing a burnout gets higher. For this reason, this study deals with the relationship between burnout and compassion fatigue and the psychological counselors' perception of self-efficacy.

Another subject that this study examines is the levels of compassion satisfaction of school psychological counselors. As burnout has a negative effect on the performance of psychological counselors so is compassion satisfaction expected to have a positive effect. Compassion satisfaction is regarded as the contentment, pleasure or professional satisfaction that comes as a result of one's helping another in need in his/her own professional capacity (Stamm, 2005). While the satisfaction derived from work has a positive effect on the other aspects of an individual's life, unhappiness, disappointment and reluctance in work life affect the satisfaction to be derived from life (Sevimli and İşcan,

2005). According to Bandura (1997), compassion satisfaction is affected by internal motivational factors such as self-efficacy perceptions as well as external factors such as environmental factors (various demands of administrators) and direct feedbacks from role models (supervisors and colleagues). Self-efficacy perception is one of the basic concepts put forward by Bandura (1982, 1986, 1997), a social learning theorist, and propounded to have an effect on behavior. According to Bandura (1982), self-efficacy is individual's own judgment on how well he/she performs the actions necessary to deal with probable situations. When the literature is examined, it is evident that self-efficacy perception has been an important subject of study in recent years, especially in the field of counseling and counseling education. Studies on the self-efficacy perceptions of school psychological counselors (Crook, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008) focus more on counseling skills and center more around the self-efficacy of psychological counselors and self-efficacy perceptions regarding counseling skills. Studies conducted on the relationship between psychological counselors' compassion satisfaction, their levels of burnout and compassion fatigue and self-efficacy perceptions are very limited.

The examination of the variables that predict the performance of school psychological counselors and raising counselor's performance are important in terms of the improvement of this profession. In line with the findings of the self-efficacy studies done in the field of psychological counseling and guidance, self-efficacy can be expected to have an effect on the activities of the psychological counselors working in the field of psychological counseling and guidance (Tang et al., 2004). That is why this study deals with the relationship between school psychological counselors' levels of seeing themselves as competent and their levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout and compassion fatigue. In addition, the study examines whether or not the psychological counseling skills (PCS) of school psychological counselors and their levels of seeing themselves as competent in the field of multidimensional roles and skills are significant predictors of compassion satisfaction, burnout and compassion fatigue. The questions that this study tried to answer are as follows:

1. Is there a significant relationship between school psychological counselors' PCS, multidirectional roles and skills (MRS) self efficacy levels and their job satisfaction burn-out and compassion fatigue levels?
2. Do school psychological counselors' PCS, MRS self efficacy levels predict their their job satisfaction burn-out and compassion fatigue levels significantly?

METHODS

Participants

Using the relational scanning model, the research involved a total of

Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients between scores related to ProQOLS and SCCES subscales.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Compassion satisfaction	-				
Burnout	-0.377*	-			
Compassion fatigue	-0.536*	0.227*	-		
PCS	0.757*	-0.195*	-0.558*	-	
MRS	0.767*	-176*	-0.530*	0.901*	-

*p<0.05.

142 school psychological counselors composed of 77 women (54.2%) and 65 men (45.8%) who work at elementary and secondary schools.

Data collection tools

Professional quality of life scale-ProQOLS

Developed by Stamm (2005) in the aim of measuring school psychological counselors' life quality and adapted to Turkish by Yeşil et al. (2010), ProQOLS is a self-report assessment tool consisting of thirty items and three subscales. One of the subscales is compassion satisfaction subscale composed of 10 items measuring the feeling of satisfaction and pleasure of the worker as a result of his/her helping another who is in need of help that is relative to the worker's job or an area related to the job. The second subscale, on the other hand, is the burnout subscale composed of 10 items that measures workers' despair and feeling of burnout resulting from the difficulties to deal with the problems experienced in work life. The third subscale is, again, a 10-item scale called the compassion fatigue scale that is geared towards measuring the symptoms that appear as a result of encountering stressful events. While all the items of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue are graded directly, item 1, 4, 15, 17, and 29 of the burnout subscale are graded inversely. The evaluation of the scale items are done through Likert-type gradation that consists of six grades varying between "Never" (0) and "Always" (5). The scores received from subscales varied between 0 and 60. The Alpha reliability value calculated for compassion satisfaction subscale in the adaptation study done by Yeşil et al. (2010) was .87. The alpha reliability value for burnout subscale was calculated to be 0.72 and 0.80 for compassion fatigue subscale. The Alpha reliability calculated for this study was found to be 0.83 for compassion satisfaction subscale, .69 for burnout subscale, and .76 for compassion fatigue subscale.

School counselor competency expectation scale (SCCES)

In order to measure the school counselor competency expectation, the study used the school counselor competency expectation scale (SCCES) scale developed by Yiyit (2001). In SCCES, a 5-point Likert-type scale, counselors grade whether or not the statements fit them (1-It does not fit me at all and 5-It fits me completely) pondering how confidently they can fulfill the duties or skills stated in the items. Developed by Yiyit (2001), the SCCES consists of three subscales as "Psychological Counseling Skills" (38 items), "Multidirectional Roles and Skills" (28 items), and "Skills Difficult to Perform" (22 items). In the validity study done by Özyürek (2004) on the SCCES developed by Yiyit (2001), "Psychological Counseling Skills" and "Multidirectional Roles and Skills" subscales of the SCCES were examined. Because the items in the subscale of

"Skills Difficult to Perform" resemble the scope of the items of the other subscales, but all of the items consist of negative statements, this dimension was not taken into the examination. In the two-factor structure analysis done by Özyürek (2004), 6 items from the factor called "Psychological Counseling Skills" and 4 items from the factor called "Multidirectional Roles and Skills" were omitted and, thereby, the scale gained its final shape. The Cronbach's alpha values of these two scales were found to be .97 and .96, respectively. This study used two-factor SCCES whose final shape was given by Özyürek (2004). The score range was 32-160 for the SCCES-PCS subscale and 24-120 for MRS. Neither of the two subscales has items involving negative statements. High scores indicate high perceptions of competency expectance. In these two subscales, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated to be .93 and .89, respectively.

Process

Research data was obtained by the researcher in the first three months of 2011. The researcher calculated the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients in order to find whether or not there is any direct relationship between predictor variables (SCCES-PCS, SCCES-MRS subscales) and predicted variables (ProQOLS-Compassion Satisfaction, ProQOLS-Burnout, ProQOLS-Compassion Fatigue subscales). Then, the data was subjected to a linear regression analysis technique. Significance level was taken as .05 in the research.

FINDINGS

Here, the findings reached as a result of the statistical analysis of the data obtained in the research are given below in order of questions sought to be answered:

Is there a significant relationship between school psychological counselors' PCS, MRS self efficacy levels and their job satisfaction burn-out and compassion fatigue levels?

The results of the Pearson correlation technique applied to these scores in order to determine the relationship between the scores that the school counselors, who participated in the research, received from the subscales of ProQOLS and SCCES are given in Table 1.

When Table 1 is examined, it is noticed that there is a negative relationship between the compassion satisfaction subscale of ProQOLS and burnout ($r=-0,377$, $p<.005$)

Table 2. ProQOLS–The results of multiple regression analysis related to the prediction of compassion satisfaction subscale.

Variable	B	Constant error	B	t	p
PCS	0.084	0.029	0.354	2.917	0.004
MRS	0.195	0.053	0.447	3.683	0.001
R=0.782	R ² =0.611		F ₍₂₋₁₄₀₎ =109.392		P=0.001

Table 3. ProQOLS–Multiple regression analysis results regarding the prediction of burnout subscale.

Variable	B	Constant error	B	t	p
PCS	-0.035	0.035	-0.190	-0.995	0.322
MRS	-0.002	0.065	-0.005	-0.026	0.0980
R=0.195	R ² =0.038		F ₍₂₋₁₄₀₎ =2.737		P=0.068

Table 4. ProQOLS–Multiple regression analysis results regarding the prediction of compassion fatigue subscale.

Variable	B	Constant error	B	t	p
PCS	-0.080	0.030	-0.426	-2.644	0.009
MRS	-0.051	0.056	-0.146	-0.907	0.366
R=0.562	R ² =0.316		F ₍₂₋₁₄₀₎ =32.039		P=0.001

and compassion fatigue subscales ($r=-0.536$, $p<0.05$). On the other hand, it will also be observed that there is a highly significant positive relationship between the compassion satisfaction subscale of ProQOLS and the PCS ($r=0.757$, $p<0.05$) MRS ($r=0.767$, $p<0.05$) subscales of SCCES. Table 1 shows that there is a positive relationship between the burnout subscale of ProQOLS and compassion fatigue subscale ($r=0.227$, $p<0.05$) and there is a significant negative relationship between PCS ($r=-0.195$, $p<0.05$) and MRS ($r=-0.176$, $p<0.05$) subscales of SCCES. The study also reveals a significant negative relationship between compassion fatigue subscale of ProQOLS and PCS ($r=-0.558$, $p<0.05$) and MRS subscales of SCCES ($r=-0.530$, $p<0.05$).

Do school psychological counselors' PCS, MRS self efficacy levels predict their their job satisfaction burn-out and compassion fatigue levels significantly?

The findings related to the prediction of compassion satisfaction subscale of ProQOLS by the scores received by school counselors from the subscales of SCCES are given in Table 2; the findings related to ProQOLS's prediction of the burnout subscale are given in Table 3; and the findings related to the SCCES's prediction of the compassion fatigue subscale are given in Table 4.

According to the findings in Table 2, the SCCES, which was subjected to analysis as a predictor variable, was found to have significantly predicted ProQOLS's compassion satisfaction subscale along with its PCS and MRS subscales (Multiple $R=0.782$, $R^2=0.611$, $F=109.392$

$p<0.01$). This finding explains the 61,1% of the variance related to SCCES's subscales of PCS and MRS, which were subjected to analysis as a predictor, together with the score taken from ProQOLS's compassion satisfaction subscale. According to the results of the t-test regarding the independent variables, MRS ($\beta=0.447$), one of the two independent variables, is the strongest predictor of ProQOLS's compassion satisfaction subscale and this is followed by the PCS subscale ($\beta=0.354$).

Findings in Table 3 show that SCCES, which was subjected to analysis as a predictor variable, along with the subscales of PCS and MRS, are not a significant predictor of the burnout subscale of ProQOLS (Multiple $R=0.195$, $R^2=0.038$, $F=2.737$, $p>0.01$). According to this finding the PCS and MRS subscales of SCCES are not predictors of the burnout subscale of ProQOLS.

According to the findings in Table 4, SCCES which was subjected to analysis as a predictor variable along with the subscales of PCS and MRS, are significant negative predictors of the compassion fatigue subscale of ProQOLS (Multiple $R=0.562$, $R^2=0.316$, $F=32.039$, $p<0.01$). This finding shows that the PCS and MRS subscales of SCCES, which was subjected to analysis as a predictor, explains 31,6% of the variance related to the scores taken from the compassion fatigue subscale of ProQOLS. According to the t-test results regarding independent variable, PCS ($\beta=-0.426$) from the two variables is the strongest predictor of the compassion fatigue subscale of ProQOLS. The level of prediction of SCCES's MRS subscale of ProQOLS's ($\beta=-0.146$) compassion fatigue subscale was found to be insignificant at a rate of 0.05.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research, conducted for determining the relationship between school counselors' levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and compassion fatigue and their self-efficacy perceptions of PCS and multi-dimensional role and skills, were found in general to be consistent with the literature except for a couple of surprising results. First of all, the research found a significant positive relationship between compassion satisfaction and self-efficacy perceptions of both PCS ($r=0.757$, $p<0.05$) and multidirectional role and skills ($r=0.767$, $p<0.05$). According to this result, it can be said that the level of compassion satisfaction increases as the self-efficacy perception of both PCS and multidirectional role and skills increases. In the findings regarding the prediction of compassion satisfaction by self-efficacy perceptions of PCS and multidirectional role and skills, it was found that self-efficacy perception explains 61.1% of the variance related to compassion satisfaction. This result shows that the level of school counselors' seeing themselves as competent in various roles related to their profession is a very important predictor compassion satisfaction. These results support Bandura's (1997) view that compassion satisfaction is affected by internal motivational factors such as self-efficacy perceptions as well as external motivational factors such as direct feedbacks coming from environmental factors (various demands of administrators) and role models (supervisors and co-workers). It is an expected result that high level of self-efficacy perception as to roles and duties in the field of professional boost the work performance and, thus, cause compassion satisfaction.

Lent et al. (2006) stated that counselors having high self-efficacy perception perform better than counselors who have low self-efficacy perception in terms of having command on the counseling process, helping the counselee more, and overcoming obstacles. Considering that self-efficacy perception of MRS in particular is the strongest predictor of compassion satisfaction ($\beta=.447$, $t=3.683$, $p<.05$), it becomes clear that self-efficacy perception levels regarding matters (excluding psychological counseling activities at schools) such as MRS is a factor to be focused on especially during counselor education. In their research, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found that school counselors' self-efficacy perception in duties appropriate for them is higher than their self-efficacy perception in duties inappropriate for them. However, it was found that, exhibiting self-efficacy in appropriate duties is not a significant predictor of compassion satisfaction, but rather, self-efficacy in inappropriate duties is a significant predictor. They explained this situation by Bandura's (1997) view that, self-efficacy leads to satisfaction even in unpleasant situations. These findings are consistent with the findings obtained in our research.

The most surprising result reached in the research is

about the relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy perceptions and their burnout levels. Cherniss (1993) asserts that one's low professional self-efficacy leads to his/her burnout. According to Cherniss (1993), burnout is a function of the perceived professional self-efficacy and the probability of experiencing burnout increases as the individual's belief and view as to his/her self-efficacy moves towards the negative. In his study on school counselors, İköz (2010) also determined that psychological counselors who expressed perception of incompetency in their profession experience burnout. Relying on this finding, he commented that personal and professional competency perception is an important variable that affects the burnout level. Regarding burnout, Cherniss (1993) claims that internal and personal factors are effective whereas Sheffield and Baker (2005) claim that both internal and external factors are effective. When the findings of this research are examined, it was observed that there is a negatively significant but low level relationship between self-efficacy perceptions of both PCS ($r=-.195$, $p<.05$) and MRS ($r=-.176$, $p<.05$) and burnout. The results regarding the prediction of burnout by self-efficacy perceptions ($r=.038$, $p<.05$) revealed that the self-efficacy perception of neither PCS nor multidirectional role and skills is an important factor that affects the burnout that school counselors experience. This situation can be explained by Kesler's (1990) view, which he stated in an article that discussed counselors' burnout, that there is a need for multi-dimensional conceptualization and action plans due to wide range of reasons and symptoms for burnout. This is because, researches that examine the causes of school counselors' burnout focus mostly on environmental factors such as contact duration with the counselee (Reed, 1977), heavy workload, lack of time, and not being able to involve in administration (Minahan, 1980) as factors affecting burnout. In addition, to these factors, it can be said that factors such as both the uncertainties experienced in roles and responsibilities and school counselors' dealing with or their being compelled to deal with activities irrelevant to psychological counseling and guidance (Baker, 2001) are basic factors that affect school counselors' burnout.

Another issue that this research focused on was the relationship between school counselors' level of compassion fatigue and their self-efficacy perceptions. According to the findings gathered in this respect, there is a negative, significant, moderate-level relationship between self-efficacy perceptions of both PCS ($r=-.558$, $p<.05$) and MRS ($r=-.530$, $p<.05$), and compassion fatigue. In findings related to the prediction of compassion fatigue by self-efficacy perceptions of PCS and MRS, it was found that self-efficacy perceptions explain 31.6% of the variance related to compassion fatigue. This result shows that the level of school counselors' seeing themselves as competent in various roles related to their profession is an important predictor of the compassion

fatigue that they are likely to experience. The findings also show that there is a negative and moderately significant relationship ($r=-.536$, $p<.05$) between compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction and that there is a positive and lowly significant relationship between compassion fatigue and burnout ($r= 0.227$, $p<0.05$). These findings are consistent with Conrad and Keller-Guenther's (2006) findings, that the compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue of child protection workers in Colorado are not related to their burnout. Researchers noted that, although 49.9% of the participants were at a risk of compassion fatigue, they were not in significant risk in terms of burnout. There was a positive low-level relationship between compassion fatigue and burnout, which can be explained by the fact that compassion fatigue is not the most important factor but only one of the factors that leads to burnout. The findings indicate that burnout might be a factor related to the dimension of emotional exhaustion. For this reason, further studies might be carried out that will examine the relationship between the sub-dimensions of compassion fatigue and burnout.

In conclusion, compassion fatigue is professional problem for those who work in the field of psychological counseling. For this reason, school counselors should have skills such as dealing with anxiety, self-improvement, and expanding social network of support in order to deal with stress factors that might cause compassion fatigue (Gentry et al., 2004). In this regard, it will be beneficial for candidates of psychological counselors to do activities that will help them develop these skills during the period of their counseling education. Organizing supportive educational activities that will increase psychological counselors' level of self-efficacy in the fields of counseling skills and multidirectional role and skills will decrease their likelihood of experiencing burnout and compassion fatigue and boost their work performance by increasing their level in compassion satisfaction.

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