

## MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCY OF TURKISH COUNSELORS BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES \*

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### Abstract

This study reports the multicultural counseling competency of Turkish counselors based on their a) gender, b) ethnicity, c) religion, d) years of experience in counseling, e) age and counselors' level of interaction with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds. The Multicultural Counseling Inventory was translated into Turkish and adapted to demographics of Türkiye's population since the sample of the study was Turkish counselors. 97 counselors who at least have a bachelor degree or more from a Turkish counseling program and also currently work in private practice, in the K-12 school systems and in universities in Türkiye participated the study. The findings of the study showed that counselors have different multicultural counseling competency scores in terms of various demographic variables. The different scores were especially apparent in the years of experience which indicated that experience in the counseling field enhances the multicultural counseling competency of counselors. Moreover, the results revealed a statistically significant correlation between the extent of contact with culturally diverse clients and the participants' overall MCI scores. Additionally, the study demonstrated that counselors improve their multicultural counseling skills by working with clients from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, counselors are encouraged to engage with more culturally diverse clients and remain attentive, empathetic, and open-minded when providing services to enhance the quality of their counseling practice.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Counseling, Turkish Counselors, Multicultural Counseling Competency, Multicultural Experience, Culturally Different Clients

### Introduction

Counselors must possess multicultural counseling competency to serve every individual in society efficiently. Multicultural competency encompasses three core characteristics: (a) the counselor's active awareness of personal assumptions, values, and biases, (b) understanding the worldview of the culturally diverse client, and (c) developing strategies and techniques aligned with the client's culture. These three elements of multicultural counseling are among the three fundamental traits that make up multicultural competency (Sue et al., 1992).

According to a different viewpoint, multicultural counseling is defined as gaining more knowledge about various cultures and approaching individuals from those cultures by incorporating traditional counseling theories, rather than the other way around, which would undermine or even compete with traditional counseling approaches. Although, demographic variables like age and gender and ethnographic variables like ethnicity, nationality, religion, and language are the first variables that comes to mind when thinking about multicultural counseling. Variables like social, educational, and economic circumstances as well as the

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family structure and lifestyle of the clients are also incorporated in multicultural counseling as important factors (Pedersen, 1991).

Furthermore, in addition to the three domains (knowledge, skills, and attitudes-beliefs), certain other characteristics have been proposed for multicultural competence. For instance, some investigations in the field have demonstrated that racial identity development is strongly linked to multicultural counseling ability, making it a highly recommended component of multicultural competence (Sue, 2001). Similarly, because it is so important to the multicultural counseling process, the multicultural counseling relationship should also be included as a component of multicultural counseling competency (Sodowsky et al., 1994).

According to Patterson (1996), multicultural counseling should not be viewed as distinct from counseling in general. He claims that because cultural diversity and culture-specific counseling are currently overemphasized, there is a focus on particular skills or techniques in multicultural counseling, where the counselor acts as a chameleon, adapting their methods, styles, and techniques to suit the presumptive traits of clients from various groups and cultures. The overemphasis on culture-specific counseling also causes people to focus on cultural differences and opposing worldviews, ignoring the reality that, as a global society, we are quickly merging into one through rapid communication and growing intercultural relationships. Consequently, there is a growing homogeneity and a worldview that reflects the humanity that unites all people on the planet as a single species with a uniform culture. As a result, it is noted that without the assistance of multicultural therapy, which incorporates the client's culture and particular viewpoints within that culture, it is nearly impossible for a counselor to succeed in his work using any conventional counseling theory (Patterson, 1996; Pedersen, 1991).

This fundamental significance of cultural competence and social diversity is acknowledged by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Diversity and advocacy are specifically mentioned in each part of the CACREP guidelines, highlighting the impact that belonging to a culturally diverse group has on clients with various issues (CACREP, 2009). Cultural sensitivity is also highly valued by the American Counseling Association (ACA). According to ACA's code of ethics, counselors should be open and considerate of cultural differences, support clients in obtaining the right services, and remove obstacles that impede their growth on an individual, group, institutional, and societal level (ACA, 2005).

In psychological counseling, clients' cultural backgrounds play a significant role in the counseling process and are a crucial element of multicultural counseling. Culture can be defined as the shared ways of thinking, interacting, behaving, perceiving the world, and making judgments based on the values, norms, and traditions of a specific group or environment. Additionally, each individual possesses a cultural perspective shaped by how they view their own cultural patterns of thought and behavior in comparison to those of others (Chamberlain, 2005).

Additionally, when working with clients from culturally varied backgrounds, practitioners must increase their cultural sensitivity and awareness, according to both the counseling associations (APA & CACREP). Additionally, they endorse and support specific ethical principles for counselors that explicitly highlight the need for cultural sensitivity and understanding in the areas of language, confidentiality, disclosure, antidiscrimination, and evaluation (Sheely-Moore & Kooyman, 2011).

The significance of multicultural counseling competence is demonstrated by all of these ideas and conclusions. These competencies encourage counselors and counseling students to support equal rights, access, and opportunities for all groups in a democratic society, in addition to equipping them with the proper attitudes, knowledge, and abilities to work effectively with

clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, it is essential that all counselors possess these competencies. Therefore, among counseling programs, training and educational initiatives that foster multicultural counseling competencies are vital.

Hence, many countries try and update their counseling programs and regulations in order to have competent counselors and Türkiye is no exception as a country that has long history of counseling services. A four-year college degree is required in Türkiye in order to work as a counselor. As a result, students in Türkiye receive their counseling instruction through an undergraduate degree, and obtaining a graduate counseling degree is more of a personal decision. In comparison to many other nations, the field of counseling services has a long history in Türkiye. In the 1950s, psychological counseling services were introduced into the Turkish educational system. Nonetheless, certain counseling practices date back to the 1920s, during the early years of the Turkish Republic (Kuzgun, 2000). Additionally, there have been notable advancements in career counseling during the early years of the Turkish Republic. Professionals looked at pupils in the 1920s, attempting to determine their requirements, abilities, and traits. They then urged them to choose a vocation that matched their unique traits and qualities (Piskin, 2006).

These services hold a special place in Türkiye 's counseling profession's history. However, the most useful advancements and the therapeutic breakthrough began in Türkiye approximately 60 years ago. The years 1950–1956 are referred to as the initial steps period, the years 1957–1969 as formative years, the years 1970–1981 as the establishment of counseling services in schools, the years 1982–1995 as the establishment of undergraduate counseling programs, and the years 1996–present as the assignment of counselors to schools, according to Dogan (2000), who uses five terms to describe these developments in the counseling profession.

During the first phase (1950–1956), American counselor educators traveled to Türkiye and gave counseling seminars to a group of distinguished Turkish educators, teachers, and school principals. Some pilot applications in counseling and guiding were also used by these counseling specialists (Tan, 1986). The Turkish Ministry of Education also offered scholarships to recent college graduates during this time so they could pursue graduate degrees in subjects like psychology, counseling, and measuring overseas. The counseling field in Türkiye was significantly impacted by American counseling specialists and students who earned degrees in counseling and similar fields in the US and other foreign nations. These factors led to the establishment of the first Guidance and Research Center in Ankara, Türkiye, which offered services to children with impairments. Additionally, classes on counseling and guidance approaches began to be incorporated into the curriculum and coursework of Gazi Teachers' Training College in Ankara, Türkiye. Consequently, guidance and counseling-related books, articles, and booklets began to be translated into Turkish for use in these classes (Girgin, 2006).

The Turkish Council of National Education toured numerous nations and studied their educational systems during the second phase (1957–1969). The need for guidance and counseling services in schools was thus given a lot of weight in their report on the Turkish educational system (Dogan, 1996). It has been decided that counselor training programs ought to exist in Türkiye as a result of the report. As a result, in 1965, Ankara University launched the first undergraduate program in Educational Psychology and Guidance inside the College of Education (Kuzgun, 1993). Following that, Middle East Technical University, Ankara University, and Bogazici University began to offer graduate-level counseling programs, while Hacettepe University inaugurated a master's degree counseling program in 1967 (Dogan, 1996).

The first counselors began working in Turkish schools during the third period (1970–1981). The Turkish Ministry of National Education hired 90 school counselors in 24 pilot secondary schools during the 1970–1971 school year in an effort to enhance the educational

system (Stockton & Guneri, 2011). Additionally, the Turkish Ministry of National Education made the decision to offer counseling services to all of the nation's secondary schools, but this did not actually occur. However, weekly counseling hours were incorporated into the curriculum for all grade levels in the schools during the 1974–1975 school year (Kuzgun, 1991).

More Turkish universities began offering counseling programs in 1982, and students began to be admitted to these undergraduate guidance and counseling programs during the fourth period (1982–1995). Furthermore, the Higher Education Law of 1982 mandated that colleges provide counseling services to students in need on campus, which led to a much wider recognition of the need of counseling (Demir & Aydin, 1996). In addition, the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association was established in 1989 by a group of counselors from Hacettepe University in Ankara. This association enabled practitioners in the counseling sector collaborate and raised awareness of the counseling profession as a whole. Additionally, the group established the Journal of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, which allowed Turkish articles regarding the counseling field in Türkiye to be published and read (Dogan, 1998).

In the last period (1996–the present), the National Education Development Project for Pre-Service Teacher Education, which was sponsored by the World Bank and the Turkish Higher Education Council, created guidance and psychological counseling programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in 1996. These changes led to the first time that the Turkish Ministry of National Education began hiring counselors who had particular training from elementary and secondary school counseling programs (Dogan, 2000).

Guidance and Psychological Counseling are the names of the undergraduate counseling programs in Türkiye. As previously stated, graduates of these programs are eligible to practice as counselors in Türkiye. Although there are attempts to modify the title to psychological counselor, guidance teachers are the title given to counseling program graduates who work in schools. Over 100 public and private universities now offer undergraduate programs in guidance and psychological counseling that prepare students to become counselors. Nevertheless, offering counseling degrees at the undergraduate level in Türkiye is quite controversial. Counseling experts and academics are arguing that counseling degrees should only be granted at the graduate level, as is the case in the US. However, providing undergraduate degrees in counseling has become essential due to the overwhelming demand for licensed counselors to work in schools. Apart from undergraduate programs, there are some colleges that offer doctoral degrees and master's programs in counseling (Korkut-Owen, 2007).

Nestled between Europe and Asia, Türkiye is home to more than 80 million people and controls the main canal connecting the Black Sea to the Aegean and Mediterranean oceans. Due to its location at the intersection of the east and west as well as the north and south, the nation has been home to several cultures and civilizations. The overwhelming population is ethnically Turkish, with a sizable minority of Kurdish and Muslim-Alewit believers, as well as minorities of Greeks, Arabs, Armenians, Cherkez, and Jews. People from a wide range of ethnic and religious origins call Türkiye, a country positioned between Asia and Europe, to be home. Due to the ongoing unrest in its neighboring countries, Türkiye has also seen a surge in foreign immigration. Counselors in Türkiye will therefore virtually certainly engage with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds (McWhirter, 1983; Kagnici, 2011).

Counselors in Türkiye must cultivate multicultural competence to effectively support both the broader Turkish population and minority communities. Minority groups, in particular, may benefit significantly from such competencies, as they often encounter cultural prejudices that can increase their need for counseling assistance. Furthermore, individuals from diverse backgrounds are increasingly emphasizing their unique cultural identities and seeking

recognition of these from professionals, including counselors. This trend of cultural diversity within societies is expected to continue expanding, and with it, the demand for culturally appropriate counseling services will also rise (Das, 1995).

Henceforth, multicultural counseling is growing in importance for counselors in most of the world. It is an approach that tailors counseling methods and goals to align with clients' cultural values, backgrounds, and life experiences. In this approach, counselors acknowledge the multifaceted nature of clients' identities—individual, group, and universal which is crucial to fully understand a person. They incorporate both universal and culturally specific techniques into their practice and place equal emphasis on individualism and collectivism when evaluating, analyzing, and supporting clients (Nystul, 2015).

Moreover, individuals from minority groups often have a greater need for counseling services (Mays & Albee, 1992). These groups frequently experience higher rates of poverty and face social stressors that negatively impact their psychological well-being. Despite these challenges, they often lack access to adequate psychological or counseling support due to their socio-economic circumstances, and when they do receive services, they are typically underserved. As a result, understanding multicultural counseling and developing competence in this area is not merely optional for counselors but rather a moral obligation they must prioritize (Lee, 2014; Mays & Albee, 1992).

So, what exactly is multicultural counseling? While professionals in the field offer slightly varying definitions, they generally share common themes. Sue (2001) defines multicultural counseling as an approach that incorporates methods and sets goals aligned with clients' values, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences. In this process, counselors recognize and address the multiple dimensions of clients' identities—individual, group, and universal. They integrate both universal and culturally specific strategies into the counseling process and emphasize the importance of balancing individualism and collectivism when assessing, analyzing, and supporting clients.

Several factors can influence an individual's multicultural counseling competency (MCC), and ethnicity is one such factor believed to play a significant role. Research using self-report measures to assess MCC has shown that minority counseling professionals and trainees tend to rate themselves higher on MCC scales compared to their White American counterparts (Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995). Similarly, another study found that Asian American, African American, and Latino counseling students scored higher on multicultural counseling competency than White American counseling students. The researchers suggested that racial and ethnic minority students may develop stronger MCC because they are consistently exposed to the dominant American culture, which is shaped by European American norms and differs from their own cultural backgrounds (Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Richardson, & Corey, 1998).

In a study involving doctoral-level psychology students, Constantine (2001) used observer ratings to evaluate multicultural counseling competency (MCC) and explore potential differences across ethnic groups. The results showed that African American and Hispanic students received higher MCC ratings than their White American peers. Constantine suggested that minority students' frequent exposure to racial and ethnic challenges in their everyday lives enhances their sensitivity to multicultural issues, making them more adept at working with clients from diverse backgrounds (Constantine, 2001; Ridley et al., 2021).

In another study conducted by Ivers (2012), the same phenomenon was explored using the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) with 141 master's and doctoral counseling students. Among the participants, 55% identified as European American ( $n = 78$ ), 25% as African American ( $n = 35$ ), 14% as Hispanic/Latino/Latina ( $n = 19$ ), 2% as Asian or Pacific



Islander (n = 3), and 4% as Bi/multiracial or other (n = 6). The findings revealed that minority students scored higher on both the overall MCI and its four subscales compared to their European American peers (Ivers, 2012).

Interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds can significantly enhance cultural awareness and sensitivity in ways we might not fully anticipate. Villegas and Lucas (2002) explored the impact of such interactions on cultural sensitivity by examining how field experiences influenced teachers' understanding of culturally responsive teaching. In their study, teachers moved beyond the university classroom and engaged with schools and communities composed of people from various cultural backgrounds. These teachers visited communities where culturally diverse students lived, interacting with their families, community members, and cultural groups. The authors found that these experiences deepened the teachers' knowledge and sensitivity toward values, lifestyles, and cultures different from their own—qualities essential for developing multicultural competence

A key aspect of multiculturalism is internationalization, and gaining international experience is considered one of the most influential factors in developing multicultural counseling competency. Study abroad programs are a common way for students worldwide to acquire such multicultural experiences. Students in fields categorized as "helping professions" often report that the cross-cultural interactions they engage in during study abroad trips positively influence their multicultural awareness. These experiences can lead to meaningful changes that enhance their ability to interact effectively with clients and colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds. Numerous studies have examined the impact of these cross-cultural connections formed during study abroad trips (Anderson et al., 2006).

For instance, Anderson et al. (2006) found that participants in study abroad programs demonstrated improved ability to accept and adapt to other cultures, as well as a reduction in cultural biases. Additionally, positive and non-threatening interactions with individuals from different cultures were shown to decrease participants' anxiety about engaging with other cultural groups (Stephan & Stephan, 1992). Regardless of the specific experiences that prompted these changes, participants acknowledged that study abroad trips altered their perspectives. They expressed confidence that the lessons learned during these experiences would stay with them and inform their future interactions (Ribeiro, 2005).

In a study examining the impact of studying abroad, students from Texas Christian University who spent a semester in different countries were compared to those who remained on campus. The findings revealed that students who studied abroad experienced significantly greater improvement in their intercultural communication skills and cultural proficiency compared to those who stayed in Texas (Williams, 2005).

Stachowski and Mahan (1998) also investigated the effects of international field experiences on students in a teaching program who stayed with host families in another country. The study found that student teachers who participated in these international experiences viewed the people they interacted with as highly significant sources of learning. The authors noted that as relationships with host families grew, mutual sharing of cultural information took place, stereotypes about other cultures diminished, and students and host families began to observe and adopt aspects of each other's lifestyles.

In a study focusing on the multicultural competence of international counseling students, 25 international students from various universities in the United States and different countries worldwide were examined regarding their experiences and perceptions of multicultural counseling training and the impact of living in a culturally diverse environment. International counseling students in the U.S. represent a unique population for studying the combined effects of international experience and multicultural counseling training. These

students not only receive formal education in multicultural counseling but also undergo the transformative experience of living in a different culture. The authors concluded that developing multicultural awareness may stem more from direct cross-cultural experiences. Without such experiences, these students might not have recognized or challenged their biases to the same extent. Thus, living in a culturally different environment can create the necessary conditions for becoming aware of and addressing cultural biases and stereotypes (Smith & Ng, 2009).

Counseling education and practice in Türkiye have long been heavily influenced by Western approaches, both historically and in the present day. Although western influence can be seen clearly in Türkiye, the people of Türkiye does not have the same culture of west which the counseling approaches and practices stem from. Specifically, Turkish clients from rural areas often have a more traditional cultural background and are less Westernized compared to those in urban centers (Vassaf, 1983). As a result, there is a growing call for greater integration of culturally sensitive and indigenous counseling approaches that align with the unique needs of Türkiye's population. Such integration is seen as essential to providing more effective and relevant counseling services to the Turkish people (Raney & Çınarbaş, 2005)

Hence, it is essential for counselors in Türkiye to develop multicultural competence to effectively serve both the general Turkish population and minority groups. Minority groups, in particular, may require such competencies, as they often face cultural biases that can lead to a greater need for counseling support. For instance, an Arab client might share experiences of racism and its impact during a counseling session. Similarly, a homosexual client might seek help to cope with severe criticism or discrimination related to their sexual orientation. There are numerous examples of minority clients in Türkiye who encounter prejudice and discrimination due to their ethnic background, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation (Kagnici, 2013).

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Despite the clear need for multiculturally competent counselors in Türkiye, multicultural counseling training is not a mandatory component of Turkish counseling programs (Bektas, 2006). Only some of the counseling programs in the country offer courses on multicultural counseling, and even these are typically elective. As a result, not all students in these programs enroll in such courses, as they are not required. Additionally, these courses often lack comprehensive content necessary for fostering multicultural competence and may not be adequately tailored to Türkiye's unique cultural context (Kagnici, 2011).

As a result, it is strongly advised that they get multicultural counseling training while enrolled in counseling programs. However, there is little study on the multicultural counseling competency of Turkish counselors and very little multicultural counseling education in Türkiye (Kagnici, 2014). Hence, this study examined the multicultural counseling competencies of Turkish counselors based on a) gender, b) ethnicity, c) religion, d) years of experience in counseling, and e) age, and investigated the relationship between the extent of counselors' contact with culturally diverse clients and their multicultural counseling competency with the following research questions:

1 - What are the participants' overall Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) score based on their a) gender, b) ethnicity, c) religion, d) years of experience in counseling, and e) age?

2 - To what extent is there a correlation between extent of contact with culturally different clients and multicultural counseling inventory scores of participants?

## Method

In order to use the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) permission obtained

from Dr. Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky (Department of Clinical Psychology Director, Antioch University New England Multicultural Center) to conduct this study using the MCI survey in Turkish and adapt and translate it to Turkish. The researcher wrote the Turkish MCI items with collaboration of professionals in counseling field who were fluent in both English and Turkish. In the translation and adaptation process of the MCI, the researcher worked with four professionals in the counseling field who were fluent in both Turkish and English languages. First, the MCI was translated into Turkish with collaboration of these four professionals. Then, this translated MCI was translated back into English by three other professionals in the counseling field who were fluent in Turkish and English. After that procedure, the final Turkish MCI was formed with the agreement of the first four professionals in the counseling field on all of the items.

97 Turkish counselors with at least a bachelor's degree in a Turkish counseling program who were employed in private practice, K–12 educational institutions, and Turkish universities participated in this study. The Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) was used in this survey research study to determine the multicultural counseling competency of Turkish counselors depending on their a) gender, b) ethnicity, c) religion, d) years of counseling experience, and e) age.

A two-part survey was used to collect the data. In addition to the demographic questions, which asked about gender, ethnicity, religion, age, years of counseling experience, and multicultural counseling training, the survey also included the Multicultural Counseling Inventory, which was developed by Sodowsky et al. (1994) to evaluate the key components of multicultural counseling competency. Also, the second question of the research was asked participants as below; “How frequently do you work with clients who are culturally different from you, as listed below”? This question had five response choices (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, All of the Time) and asked participants about 6 different client groups that can be seen as culturally different in Türkiye (ethnicity, religious beliefs, different language or accents, sexual orientation, disabilities, socioeconomic level). Cronbach's alpha that measured internal reliability of items related to extent of contact with culturally different clients was 0.73. Forty self-report statements are included in the Multicultural Counseling Inventory. A 4-point Likert-type scale is used to score these statements: 4 indicates "very accurate," 3 indicates "somewhat accurate," 2 indicates "somewhat inaccurate," and 1 indicates "very inaccurate." With the exception of seven items in the questionnaire that were reversed to counteract the effects of a response set, a score of 1 denotes low multicultural counseling competency and a score of 4 denotes great multicultural competence. Descriptive data, including frequencies and percents, were compiled for participants based on their age, years of counseling experience, gender, ethnicity, and religion in order to address the research question.

The researcher obtained permission from Dr. Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky (Department of Clinical Psychology Director, Antioch University New England Multicultural Center) to conduct this study using the MCI survey in Turkish and adapt and translate it to Turkish. In the translation and adaptation process of the MCI, the researcher worked with four professionals in the counseling field who were fluent in both Turkish and English languages. First, the MCI was translated into Turkish with collaboration of these four professionals. Then, this translated MCI was translated back into English by another three professionals in the counseling field who were fluent in Turkish and English. After that procedure, the final Turkish MCI was formed with the agreement of the first four professionals in the counseling field on all of the items.

The Multicultural Counseling Inventory was translated into Turkish and adapted to Türkiye's population demographic information since the sample of the study was Turkish counselors. Regarding the reliability of the Turkish version of the MCI used in this study, the



overall Multicultural Counseling Inventory scale had a mean Cronbach's alpha of .88. For the Turkish MCI used in this study; the mean Cronbach's alpha for (a) Multicultural Counseling Skills was .86, (b) Multicultural Awareness .84, (c) Multicultural Counseling Relationship .59, and (d) Multicultural Counseling Knowledge .87.

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was used to test the null hypothesis stated as: There is no statistically significant correlation between extent of contact with culturally different clients and the overall Multicultural Counseling Inventory scores of participants.

## Results

The total number of counselors who responded to this study was 97. The majority of the counselors in the study were female ( $N = 62$ ; 63.9%), Turkish ( $N = 65$ ; 67.0%), and Muslim-Sunni ( $N = 66$ ; 68.0%). In terms of ethnicity, the biggest minority group was Kurdish ( $N = 23$ ; 23.7%) among the participants, and in terms of religion nonbelievers made the highest minority group ( $N = 19$ ; 19.6%) among the participants. More than one-half of the participants were under the age of 30 and more than one-half of the participants had more than five years of experience in the counseling field. Table 1 shows the frequencies and percents of the demographic information for all Turkish counselors in the study.

**Table 1**

*Frequencies and Percents of Counselors' Demographic Information*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	62	63.9
Male	35	36.1
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
Turkish	65	67.0

Kurdish	23	23.7
Armenian	0	0.0
Jewish	0	0.0
Arabic	3	3.1
Cherkez	2	2.1
Other	4	4.1
<u>Religion</u>		
Muslim-Sunni	66	68.0
Muslim-Alewit	4	4.1
Christian	0	0.0
Jewish	0	0.0
Nonbeliever	19	19.6
Other	8	8.2
<u>Counseling experience</u>		
5 years or less	46	47.4
6 to 9 years	32	33.0
10 years and more	19	19.6
<u>Age</u>		
23 to 29	58	59.8
30 or older	39	40.2

Females averaged a score of 2.79 ( $SD = .34$ ) while males averaged a score of 2.88 ( $SD = .37$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory. Turkish participants averaged a score of 2.77 ( $SD = .35$ ), Kurdish participants averaged a score of 2.9 ( $SD = .28$ ). Arabic participants averaged a score of 2.59 ( $SD = .62$ ), Cherkez participants averaged a score of 3.40 ( $SD = .17$ ), and participants who identified themselves as “other” in terms of ethnicity averaged a score of 2.99, ( $SD = .21$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory.

Participants who identified themselves as Muslim-Sunni averaged a score of 2.75 ( $SD = .36$ ). Muslim-Alewit participants averaged a score of 2.89 ( $SD = .45$ ). Participants who identified themselves as nonbeliever averaged a score of 2.96 ( $SD = .17$ ), and participants who identified their religion as “other” averaged a score of 3.03 ( $SD = .25$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory. Participants who had been counselors for five years or less averaged a score of 2.72 ( $SD = .36$ ), participants who have been counselors for six to ten years averaged a score of 2.88 ( $SD = .33$ ), and participants who have been counselors for 11 years or more averaged a score of 2.98 ( $SD = .31$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory. Participants who were 30 years of age or younger averaged a score of 2.75 ( $SD = .38$ ), and participants who were 31 years of age and older averaged a score of 2.93 ( $SD = .27$ ) on the Multicultural

Counseling Inventory. Table 2 shows descriptive data of overall Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) score for each demographic variable.

The null hypothesis for second research question was tested using the Pearson moment correlation procedure. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables with;  $r = .303$ ,  $N = 97$ ,  $p = .003$  at .01 alpha level. Therefore, the results supported the hypothesis which stated that there is statistically significant correlation between extent of contact with culturally different clients and the overall Multicultural Counseling Inventory scores of participants

Table 2

*Summary of the Descriptive Data of MCI for each demographic variable*

Variable Range	Mean	SD	Median	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
<u>Gender</u>					
Female 1.78	2.79	.34	2.78	1.60	3.38
Male 1.78	2.88	.37	2.92	1.75	3.53
<u>Ethnicity</u>					

1.78	Turkish	2.77	.35	2.80	1.60	3.38
1.20	Kurdish	2.90	.28	2.97	2.15	3.35
1.25	Arabic	2.59	.62	2.52	2.00	3.25
.25	Cherkez	3.40	.17	3.40	3.28	3.53
.50	Other	2.99	.21	2.96	2.78	3.28

Religion

1.93	Muslim-Sunni	2.75	.36	2.76	1.60	3.53
.95	Muslim-Alewit	2.89	.45	2.88	2.43	3.38
1.10	Nonbeliever	2.96	.28	2.97	2.25	3.35
.75	Other	3.03	.25	3.08	2.53	3.28

Counseling experience (years)

1.78	5 or less	2.72	.36	2.72	1.60	3.38
1.60	6 to 10	2.88	.33	2.92	1.75	3.35
1.25	11 or more	2.98	.31	3.05	2.28	3.53

Age

1.78	30 or under	2.75	.38	2.78	1.60	3.38
1.25	31 or older	2.93	.27	2.97	2.28	3.53

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Males averaged a higher score ( $M = 2.88$ ;  $SD = .37$ ) compared to females ( $M = 2.79$ ;  $SD = .34$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory. Among the ethnic groups, Cherkez

participants averaged a very high average score ( $M = 3.40$ ;  $SD = .17$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory compared to other ethnic groups although there were only two Cherkez participants in the study. The ethnic group that had the second highest average MCI score were participants who described themselves as “other” ( $M = 2.99$ ;  $SD = .21$ ). Kurdish participants had the third highest average MCI score ( $M = 2.9$ ;  $SD = .28$ ). Arabic participants had the lowest average MCI score ( $M = 2.59$ ;  $SD = .62$ ) yet there were only three Arabic participants in the study. Turkish participants who were the majority had a lower average MCI score ( $M = 2.77$ ;  $SD = .35$ ) compared to all ethnic minority groups except the Arabic participants. This finding is in keeping with findings in the literature in regard to multicultural competency scores of majority and minority groups (Pope-Davis et al., 1995; Sodowsky et al., 1998).

In terms of religion demographics, participants who identified their religion as “other” averaged the highest score ( $M = 3.03$ ;  $SD = .25$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory. Participants who identified themselves as nonbeliever averaged the second highest MCI score ( $M = 2.96$ ;  $SD = .17$ ). Muslim-Alewit participants averaged the third highest score ( $M = 2.89$ ;  $SD = .45$ ). Participants who identified themselves as Muslim-Sunni which was majority among the participants and in Türkiye in general had the lowest average MCI score of 2.75 ( $SD = .36$ ). In terms of both religion and ethnic demographics, participants who belong to the majority group (Turkish & Muslim-Sunni) had lower average MCI scores compared to participants in minority groups in Türkiye. These results are consistent with previous findings in terms of multicultural competency scores of minority and majority groups (Pope-Davis et al., 1995; Sodowsky et al., 1998).

Participants who have been counselors for 11 years or more averaged the highest score ( $M = 2.98$ ;  $SD = .31$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory. Participants who have been counselors for six to ten years averaged the second highest MCI score ( $M = 2.88$ ;  $SD = .33$ ). Participants who had been counselors for five years or less averaged the lowest MCI score ( $M = 2.72$ ;  $SD = .36$ ). These results showed that as participants had more experience in terms of number of years in the counseling field, they had higher scores on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory.

Participants who were 31 years of age or older averaged a higher score ( $M = 2.93$ ;  $SD = .27$ ) on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory compared to participants who were 30 years of age or younger ( $M = 2.75$ ;  $SD = .38$ ). In other words, these results showed that older counselors had higher average MCI scores than younger counselors, although this might be because of the experience in the counseling field.

First of all, it may be concluded that the majority demographic groups in Türkiye like Turkish or Sunni-Muslim are majority among the counseling professionals compared to the minorities based on the frequencies and percents of them among the participants in this study. Furthermore, in general, the majority demographic groups (Turkish, Sunni-Muslim) averaged lower MCI scores compared to minority groups (Kurdish, Muslim-Alewit). Previous research also showed that minority groups are more likely to have higher multicultural counseling competency scores compared to majority group (Pope-Davis et al., 1995; Sodowsky et al., 1998).

This study showed that counselors who were older and have been in the field for a longer time had better multicultural competency. This shows that experience or in other words working more in the field does improve the skills of the counselors as in the other professions. Therefore, counselors might try to do volunteer work in both general counseling services and services for culturally different clients. Such volunteer work can especially be helpful to young counselors to close the gap between them and more experienced professionals in the field in terms of professional experience.



Furthermore, the correlation between extent of contact with culturally different clients and the overall Multicultural Counseling Inventory scores of participants was a positive moderate correlation. The results indicated that counselors who have more contact with clients from different cultural backgrounds have higher MCI scores. These results were consistent with the previous studies focused on the experience of counselors or counselors in training in an environment that is culturally different from their own, especially through cultural emersion projects. These studies indicated that such experiences increase the multicultural sensitivity and even competency of counselors (Alexander et al., 2005; Burnett et al., 2004; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2011).

This study indicated that counselors who have more clients from different cultural backgrounds have higher multicultural counseling competency. This can be seen by the counselors as a clear indication that they enhance their multicultural counseling competency by serving clients from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, it is quite important for counselors to try to work with clients who are culturally different from them. This is especially vital for counselors who work in countries like Türkiye that have a population composed of people with many cultural backgrounds. Such efforts by counselors to be more multiculturally competent will be more significant as the time passes since almost every country becomes more culturally diverse with the increase in number of legal and illegal immigrants. Consequently, they can try to serve more culturally different clients and be alert, understanding, and receptive while serving such clients in order to provide a better counseling service. In turn, counselors can learn and enhance their multicultural counseling competencies.

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