

Examining the Psychological Resilience and Self-Compassion Levels of Special Education Teacher Candidates

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Abstract— This study aims to investigate the relationships between the psychological resilience and self-compassion levels of special education teacher candidates. We also examined the predictive effects of self-compassion on psychological resilience. The study group of the research consists of 374 special education teacher candidates, 257 of whom were women (68.7%), and 117 of whom were men (31.3%), all of whom we reached through convenient sampling method. We collected the study data face to face through scale forms. The participants joined the study voluntarily, and it took them 25 minutes to respond to the scale items. The method of this research was designed with the correlational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. Adult Resilience Measure, Self-Compassion Scale and Personal Information Form were used as data collection tools. In the analysis of the data, we conducted descriptive statistics, t-test, Pearson Product Moments Correlation Coefficient analysis, and simple linear regression analysis. According to the current study findings and t-test results the psychological resilience of special education teacher candidates needs do not differ significantly according to their being a gender ($t_{860}=.860$, $p>.05$). According to the results of the correlation analysis psychological resilience and self-compassion scores were positively at a low-level ($r=.285$, $p<.01$). According to the results of simple linear regression analysis, self-compassion scores significantly predicted psychological resilience scores ($F_{1,372}=32.825$, $R=.28$, $R^2=.08$, $p<.01$).

Keywords— Psychological Resilience, Self-Compassion, Special Education Teacher Candidates, Correlational Study Method, Special Educational Needs

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of psychological resilience is one of the important concepts addressed by positive psychology [1]. Psychological resilience is expressed as the individual's ability to withstand adversity [2]. In other words, psychological resilience is the individual's ability to adapt to the negativities brought by the risk situation and achieve positive results [3]. It is seen that individuals with high psychological resilience become stronger by struggling with the difficulties they face [4]. Psychological resilience emerges when the individual activates protective factors, especially in the face of traumatic events [5]. Protective factors are factors that reduce the

negative effects of risk factors and also contribute to meeting developmental needs [6]. Some of the protective factors are expressed as intelligence, academic success, age, gender, social competence, internal locus of control, optimism, hope, health, supportive parents and peer/friend support [7]. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are studies examining the relationships between psychological resilience and variables such as life satisfaction [8], neglect and abuse [9], and self-esteem [5]. It is stated that self-compassion is important in increasing the psychological resilience of the individual [10]. Self-compassion; It is expressed as the individual accepting the painful events he encounters as a normal part of his life, treating himself carefully and compassionately instead of mistreating himself in negative situations, and developing a rational perspective instead of focusing on negative emotions and thoughts [11]. At the same time, self-compassion includes being open to one's own pain, producing a desire to alleviate one's own suffering and heal oneself with compassion [12]. Self-compassion involves seeing one's own experience in the light of common human experience; It requires accepting that suffering, failure and inadequacy are part of the human condition, and that all people, including oneself, are worthy of compassion [13]. Research shows that self-compassion individuals experience less pain, harsh self-condemnation, feeling isolated, and less identification with thoughts and feelings. This situation positively affects the mental health of the individual [10]. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are studies examining the relationships between self-compassion and variables such as difficulty in emotion regulation [14], post-traumatic growth [15] and life satisfaction [16].

Special education services provided for individuals with special needs are stated to be under the responsibility of special education teachers, who are defined as specially trained personnel [17]. Special education teachers, on the other hand, are trained in special education teaching undergraduate programs operating within faculties of education [18]. The need for special education teachers is increasing in line with the number of students with special needs [19]. There are skills that special education teacher candidates must have. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between psychological resilience and self-compassion skills of special education teacher candidates.

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II. METHOD

Research Model: The current study has a quantitative research design. We employed correlational survey model as the study aims at identifying the presence and degree of the relation between two variables [20]. In this research, quantitative research methods were preferred to examine the relationship between two variables.

Study Group: The study group of the research consists of 374 special education teacher candidates, 369 of whom were women (68.7%), and 117 of whom were men (31.3%), all of whom we reached through convenient sampling method. The age range of the research group was between the ages of 18-35 (\bar{x} =23.20, SD =4.44).

Data Collection Tools

Adult Resilience Measure: It was developed by Arslan (2015) [21]. The scale is composed of 21 items. A high score received from the scale refers to a high level of psychological resilience. Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated to be .94. In the current study, we found out that Cronbach alpha was .86.

Self-Compassion Scale: It was developed by Neff (2003), and adapted into Turkish culture by Deniz, Kesici ve Sümer (2008) [13]. The scale is composed of 24 items. A high score received from the scale refers to a high level of self-compassion. Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated to be .92. In the current study, we found out that Cronbach alpha was .88.

Personal Information Form: We created a personal information form to gather demographic information about the special education teacher candidates such as age and gender.

Data Collection: We contacted the participants face-to-face to gather data. We informed the participants of the principals about confidentiality and volunteer participation. The volunteer participants responded to the items in the scales. It took participants around 25 minutes to respond to the items in the scales.

Data Analysis: We conducted descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients and multiple linear regression analysis in order to get information about the scales and participants.

III. FINDINGS

TABLE I. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS REGARDING THE VARIABLES

Scale	N	\bar{x}	ss	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Psychological Resilience	374	89.27	10.18	-.503	-.430	.86
Self-compassion	374	80.85	13.96	.093	-.037	.88

Psychological resilience and self-compassion varied between ± 1.0 , which meant that they had a normal distribution

[22]. We calculated Cronbach alpha coefficients (α) to investigate the reliability of the scales. We concluded that the scale scores of Adult Resilience Measure and Self-Compassion Scale all had Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) values equal to or over .70, which meant they were all reliable [23].

TABLE II. T-TEST RESULTS REGARDING THE PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT SCORES OF PARENTS HAVING KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ACCORDING TO THEIR GENDER

Scale	Parent	N	\bar{x}	ss	t	p
Psychological Resilience	Female	257	89.57	10.57	.860	.390
	Male	117	88.60	9.26		

As is seen in Table II, the psychological resilience of special education teacher candidates needs do not differ significantly according to their being a gender ($t_{860}=.860, p>.05$).

TABLE III. THE RESULTS OF PEARSON CORRELATION AMONG VARIABLES

	Self-compassion
Psychological Resilience	.285**

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

As is seen in Table III, psychological resilience and self-compassion scores were positively at a low-level ($r=.285, p<.01$).

TABLE IV. MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION RESULTS REGARDING THE PREDICTION OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT SCORES

Predicted Variable	Predictive Variable	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Psychological Resilience	Fixed	72.487	2.974		24.374	.000
	Self-compassion	.208	.036	.285	5.729	.000**

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

As is seen in Table IV, self-compassion scores significantly predicted psychological resilience scores ($F_{1,372}=32.825, R=.28, R^2=.08, p<.01$). Self-compassion scores accounted for 8% of the total variance on psychological resilience ($R^2=.08$).

IV. DISCUSSION

As a result of this research, it was concluded that the psychological resilience level of special education teacher candidates did not differ according to gender. When the literature was examined, no studies were found regarding the differences in the psychological resilience levels of special education teacher candidates according to gender. When the literature was examined, a study conducted with special education teachers found that psychological resilience differed according to gender and that the psychological resilience of female teachers was higher [24]. In another study conducted with special education teachers, it was found that psychological resilience did not differ according to gender [25]. In a study conducted on teacher candidates, it was found that psychological resilience differs according to gender and that male teacher candidates have higher psychological resilience levels [26]. In another study conducted on teacher candidates, it was concluded that psychological resilience differs according

to gender and that the psychological resilience levels of female teacher candidates are higher [27]. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are studies in which findings in the same direction and in different directions are obtained from this finding of the research.

As a result of this research, a positive and significant relationship was obtained between teacher candidates' psychological resilience and self-compassion scores. In other words, it was concluded that as the psychological resilience levels of teacher candidates increased, their self-compassion levels also increased. Additionally, it was concluded that self-compassion scores significantly predicted psychological resilience scores. When the literature is examined, it is seen that in a study conducted on university students, a positive relationship was obtained between the students' psychological resilience and self-compassion scores. It is stated that it is important to increase the psychological resilience level of teacher candidates in order to increase their self-understanding levels [16]. In a study conducted on young adults, a positive significant relationship was observed between psychological resilience and self-compassion [28]. When the literature is examined, it is seen that it is emphasized that psychological resilience is important in the development of self-compassion [10]. It appears that there are a limited number of studies in the literature examining the relationships between psychological resilience and self-compassion. It is seen that the findings of the studies are consistent with the findings obtained in this study. It is important for special education teacher candidates to have high levels of psychological resilience and self-compassion for both their professional and private lives. For this reason, experts should organize some activities or training within universities or health institutions in order to increase the psychological resilience and self-compassion levels of special education teacher candidates. It is recommended that researchers conduct further studies with different sample groups to investigate the effects of various variables such as gender, perceived income level, employment status, and educational status on psychological resilience and self-compassion.

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