

## **The Relationship between Individual Innovativeness and Psychological Well-Being: The Example of Turkish Counselor Trainees<sup>i</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

In this study, we handled psychological well-being (PWB) and individual innovativeness (IND-INO) as personality qualities which an effective counselor needs to possess to meet the expectancies of clients in new era. Moreover, we tried to figure out (1) the similarities between counseling process and innovativeness process and (2) the congruency between PWB and IND-INO aspects. Predictive associational survey model were administrated to 655 counselor trainees. IND-INO Scale, PWB Scale and a questionnaire were conducted online. Data analyses were made by Pearson correlation coefficients and multiple linear regression techniques. Results showed innovativeness categories of counselor trainees that they were mostly early majority and early adapters. Significant positive correlations were found between PWB levels and IND-INO levels of counselor trainees. Multiple linear regression results showed that IND-INO characteristics explain 69% of the total variance of PWB as a whole.

**Key words:** Psychological well-being, Individual innovativeness, Innovativeness, counseling, congruence

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## Introduction

Innovation is one of the biggest elements of people's lives these days. Organizations try to be innovative and people try to present innovative behavior to increase effectiveness and bring benefits (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). This influences counselors, perceptions and expectations' from counselors. Psychological aspects and individual differences are searched to reach a functional and psychologically healthy understanding for individual innovativeness (IND-INO) as a new trend in new era. These changes create paradox due to technological developments in new era results. For example, even though technology reduces spending time on needs, people complain more about time limitation in last decades than earlier. The paradoxes is not limited and occur in many areas: mental demands become more complex, social ties weaken, gender roles change, cultural aspects change, obsessive self-improvement expectancies increase. Thus, many people experience difficulties about adapting to the expectancies of work and life conditions; search for meaning and a sense of direction (Weiten, Hammer, & Dunn, 2012), and often may need professional help. As Ryff summarized (2014) preventive interventions outside the clinics are suggested to enhance psychological well-being of people rather than recovering from diverse mental health problems. Given the prior to reduce the risks for behavioral and effective adaptation problems, important new directions offered as applications, educations, and cultural influences for mental health. So, the roles of counselors in society and making researches intended for the identification and growth of their effectiveness and competency become even more important. This study investigated the relationship between psychological well-being and individual innovativeness of counselor trainees and provided the similarities between counseling process and IND-INO process and the congruency between PWB and IND-INO aspects for mental health and counselors.

Personality qualities are closely related to both professional and the therapeutic potential of counselors. All counselors bring their human qualities and life experiences to therapeutic sessions (Corey, Corey, & Callahan, 2011; Reupert, 2006), and the most important tool is seen as the counselor's own personality (Corey, 2005). That has more impact on the process and on the outcome of counseling than the orientation chosen or the intervention employed (Reupert, 2006). Establishing effective therapeutic relationship depends on such traits regarding psychological health and personality structure of counselors (Ikiz, 2009; Ikiz, 2011).

Developing one's professional identity as an effective counselor starts during process of training (Brott, 2006). At last years, researchers intensively concern on the features of counselor trainees (Korkut Owen, Tuzgol Dost, Bugay, & Owen, 2014). In this study, we handled psychological well-being (PWB) and IND-INO as personality qualities, which an effective counselor needs to possess to meet the expectancies of clients in new era, relation between these qualities and try to understand the effecting factors. Moreover, we tried to (1) figure out the similarities between counseling process and innovativeness process and (2) the congruency between PWB and IND-INO aspects for mental health. We hope that investigation of PWB and IND-INO of counselor trainees will be beneficial for contributing to their personal and professional developments, also for their teachers'.

### Psychological well-being

In recent years, researchers began to focus on positive aspects of mental health in field of counseling (Springer & Hauser, 2006), and have studied intensively the concept of well-being, a positive aspect of mental health (Clarke, Marshall, Ryff, & Wheaton, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 2014). PWB, a type of well-being, is related to the actualization of human potentials (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008).

According to multidimensional PWB model which integrates mental health, clinical and life span developmental theories, PWB consists of six dimensions: self acceptance (positive evaluation of oneself and one's past life), positive relations with others (the possession of quality relations with others), autonomy (a sense of self-determination), environmental mastery (the capacity to manage effectively one's life and surrounding world), purpose in life (the belief that one's life is purposeful

and meaningful) and personal growth (a sense of continued growth and development as a person-Ryff, 2014). According to Wissing and Eeden (2002), although the indicators of general PWB are a sense of coherence, satisfaction with life and affect-balance, PWB may exist in different patterns. Individuals don't only differ with regard to their level of PWB, but they may also differ in their particular strengths and the patterns of wellness that they manifest.

The lack of personal wellness may have an impact on the counselors' effectiveness. Counselor trainees may enhance their personal growth and development, experience more satisfaction by attaining and maintaining a greater sense of wellness. Thus, they may deal effectively with stress and anxiety, and may be more efficient to meet the demands of both their training and the work environments further (Roach & Young, 2007), academic engagement is important for PWB in first year students (Cole & Korkmaz, 2013). Yager and Tovar-Blank (2007) suggested that working to contribute students' wellness and personal health is a good starter for counselor education. Students may have some obstacle to being effective counselor, for this reason effective learning of counseling skills must include ongoing effort to develop counseling students' personal wellness. We think that having high PWB is important and beneficial for counselor trainees in terms of both their personal and professional growth.

### **Individual innovativeness**

The concept of innovativeness means interindividual differences about people's responses to new things (Goldsmith & Foxall, 2003) and includes taking risk, openness to experience, creativity and opinion-leading (Celik, 2013; Kılıcer & Odabasi, 2010). Innovativeness describes willingness to change (Braak, 2001) and "*the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a system, than about any other concept in diffusion research*" (Rogers, 1983; p. 242).

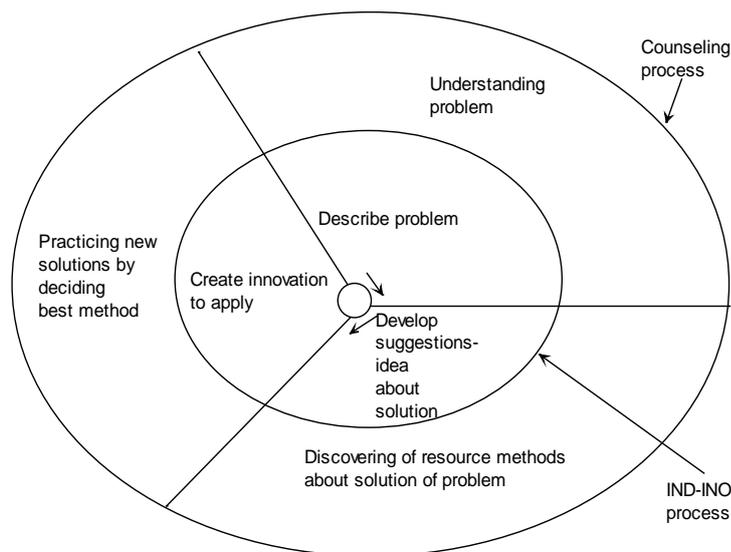
Individuals show differences about their degree of innovativeness. Because of these differences, they may adopt any kind of innovation more early or more lately, may be more or less willing to change and may take more or less risk (Kılıcer & Odabasi, 2010). In his diffusion of innovations model, Rogers (1983) suggested that peoples can be classified into five different adopter categories. These categories are "innovators", "early adopters", "early majority", "late majority" and "laggards". *Innovators* have a strong tendency toward trying new ideas and taking risk. *Early adopters* are opinion-leader in social system. They reduce uncertainty about innovation by informing and guiding the other individual in society. The *early majorities* who can easily adapt to present an innovation and serve as a role model for the others in society. Early majorities need time to adapt an innovation. *Late majorities* approach with suspicion and caution toward innovation and have difficulty in adapting, need more time. *Laggards* are resistant toward innovation and reject to try new things. Decisions of laggards are based on previous generations. These individuals wait the others to use the innovation and want to observe the outcomes (Kılıcer & Odabasi, 2010; Rogers, 1983).

To produce or practice an innovation is named as *individual innovativeness* (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Individual innovativeness (IND-INO) is seen as a personality trait which has social and psychological aspects (Midgley & Dowling, 1978). People who possess IND-INO can be freer, more responsible in moral terms and more mature when they look for more autonomy (Adiguzel, 2012). Many studies showed that university students are at early majority category in Turkey (Adiguzel, 2012; Cuhadar, Bulbul, & Ilgaz, 2013; Gur Erdogan & Zafer Gunes, 2013; Kert & Tekdal, 2012; Kocak & Onen, 2012) and gender (Celik, 2013; Cuhadar et. al, 2013) doesn't have an impact on IND-INO.

The necessity is refactoring the process of counseling to reach the effectiveness by matching clients' desires, needs, and features, in line with the aforementioned changes occur in human life conditions and needs. This state brings up the concept of IND-INO of counselors to the agenda.

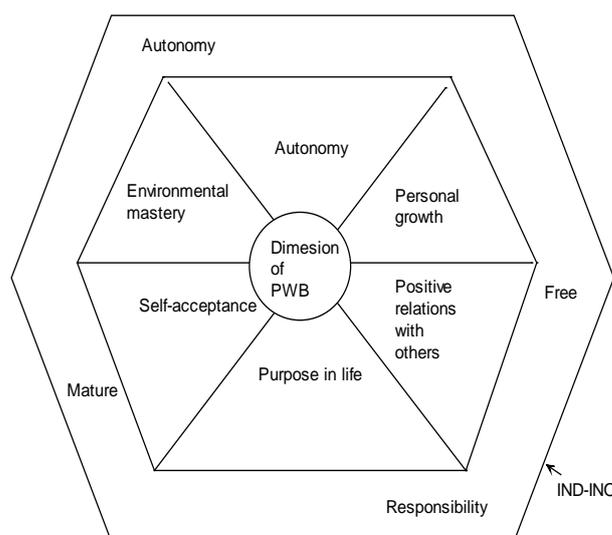
As a process, innovativeness and counseling shows similarities as you can see on Figure 1. Innovativeness processes begins with describing problem, continues with developing suggestions and

ideas about solutions and ends up with creating innovation for applying (Yilmaz & Bayraktar, 2014). Similarly, counseling process includes understanding of problem, discovering of resource and methods about solution of problem and practicing new solutions by deciding the best method. Thus, it can be said that counseling process is innovative in its nature and it depends on IND-INO of counselors. In counseling, innovation includes using new or updated counseling techniques, theories, practicing materials, evaluation inventory and technologies (Murray, 2009), innovation in counseling education field is found as helpful to increase effectiveness (Weir, Pierce, & Lucey, 2014). In literature there are many innovative approaches, techniques, inventories and practicing (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002; Hall & Hawley, 2004; Hodges, 2011; Nassar-Mcmillen & Cashwell, 1997) and it seems that such approaches will continue to increase as a result of multicultural counseling practices.



**Figure 1.** *The Similarities between IND-INO and Counseling Process*

We think that the aspect of self-growth and entrepreneur of PWB require having innovative personality. So, PWB and individual innovativeness considered as related to each other, given on Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** *The Congruence between IND-INO and Dimensions of PWB*

It is a need to express high PWB and individual innovativeness for counselor trainees now so that the research problems of present study are established as the followings:

- What are the distributions of counselor trainees according to the categories of individual innovativeness?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between psychological well-being levels and individual innovativeness levels of counselor trainees?
- Do individual innovativeness levels significantly predict psychological well-being levels of counselor trainees?

## Methodology

### Research Design and Participants

This study designed according to predictive associational survey model carried out with 655 voluntary university students who studied at Psychological Counseling and Guidance undergraduate program of 62 different universities in Turkey and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. 480 (73.3 %) of the participants were identified themselves as female and 175 (26.7 %) of them were male. The college level of the participants are: 166 (25.3 %) were freshman, 178 (27.2 %) were sophomore, 190 (29 %) were junior and 121(18.5 %) were senior

### Research Instruments

In collecting of data process, Individual Innovativeness Scale and Psychological Well Being Scale were used. Besides, the demographic features of participants were identified thorough a personal information form which was developed by researchers.

**Individual Innovativeness Scale (IIS).** The original scale was developed by Hurt, Joseph and Cook (1977), and the scale was adapted into Turkish by Kilicer and Odabasi (2010) with 20 item based on 5-point Likert type. The scale measures innovativeness in general and regards innovativeness in individual aspects as *willingness to experience new things*. The scale aims to determine categories of innovativeness and to identify the level of innovativeness in general. The scale classify individuals in five different categories such as “innovators” (over 80 score), “early adopters” (69-80 score), “early majority” (57-68 score), “late majority” (46-56 score), and “laggards” (46 and lower score). In the adaptation study of the scale, a four-factor structure was determined. These factors are “*Resistance to change*”, “*Risk-taking*”, “*Openness to experience*” and “*Opinion-leading*”. These four factors’ explained total variance was 52.52%. The internal reliability coefficient of the Turkish-version of whole scale was calculated as .82. Besides, the internal reliability of four factors were calculated, respectively, .81, .73, .77, and .62. In current study, internal reliability coefficients were found in turn, as .87, .82, .78, .89 and .87.

**Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS).** The original scale was developed by Deiner and his colleagues (2009-2010) and standardized to Turkish by Telef (2013) with 8 item based on 7-point Likert type. In the study of development of the scale it was found that the scale had sole factor structure and total variance explained was 53%. The range of factor load of the scale was .61-.77. The internal reliability of the scale was calculated as .87.

According to exploratory factor analysis, Telef (2013) indicated that explained total variance was found as 42%. In the confirmatory factor analysis fit indices were found as, RMSEA= .08, SRMR= .04, GFI= .96, NFI= .94, RFI=.92, CFI= .95 and IFI= .95. The internal reliability of the scale was calculated as .80. In this study, internal reliability of the scale was found as .96.

### Procedure and Data Analysis

The application of scales was conducted online. The online form was shared on some counseling cites in a social network (Facebook) by researchers. Sharing process was continued approximately two weeks, and totally 655 counseling students were reached in Turkey and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It was identified that there were 20 extreme values, and they were

extracted from data set. So, data analysis was made with 635 persons data set. Data analyzed with SPSS .15 statistic packet programme. Pearson correlation coefficients and multiple linear regression techniques were used. Before analyzing data, we checked the assumptions of multiple linear regressions. According to the results of Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test ( $KS=.03$ ,  $p>.05$ ), distribution of error term was normal. Error terms' means was calculated as 0.00. The results of homogeneity test showed that the variance of error terms' disturbance was stable. According to Durbin Watson value (1.96) there was no autocorrelation among error terms. The correlations among predictor variables ranged from 59 to 78. VIF values were lower than 10 and tolerance values were higher than .10. As a result, it can be said that the data provided the requirements of multiple linear regression analysis.

### Results

Table 1 gives means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values of psychological well-being (PWB) and individual innovativeness (IND-INO) of participants.

**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, Minimum and Maximum Values

	$\bar{X}$	Std. Sap.	Min.	Max.
PWB	36.95	11.80	8	56
IND-INO total	66.47	10.76	36	94
Resistance to change	3.77	0.62	1.63	5
Risk- taking	3.26	0.99	1	5
Openness to experience	3.67	0.86	1	5
Opinion leading	3.50	0.87	1	5

According to Table 1, it can be said that both PWB ( $\bar{X} = 36.95$ ) and IND-INO total ( $\bar{X} = 66.47$ ) scores of counselor trainees were a little higher than average. Similarly, in terms of sub dimensions of IND-INO scale, it was found that, resistance to change ( $\bar{X} = 3.77$ ), risk taking ( $\bar{X} = 3.26$ ), openness to experience ( $\bar{X} = 3.67$ ) and opinion leading ( $\bar{X} = 36.50$ ) mean were above average. Table 2 gives the distribution of participants according to the categories of IND-INO.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Participants According to Categories of IND-INO

Categories of IND-INO	n	%
Laggards	24	3.7
Late majority	95	14.5
Early majority	258	39.4
Early adaptors	211	32.2
Innovators	67	10.2
Total	655	100

When distributions of participants according to categories of innovativeness were examined, it was found that participants: 3.7 % were laggards, 14.5 % were late majority, 39.4 % were early majority, 32.2% were early adaptors, and 10.2% were innovators.

Table 3 gives the results of correlation between PWB levels and IND-INO levels of participants.

**Table 3.** *Correlations between PWB and IND-INO*

		PWB
IND-INO	Resistance to change	-.17*
	Risk- taking	.55*
	Openness to experience	.78*
	Opinion leading	.75*

\*p<.01

According to Table 3, there were statistically significant positive correlations among dimensions of IND-INO and PWB scores of counselor trainees. These correlations are as the following: risk taking ( $r = .55$ ), openness to experience ( $r = .78$ ) opinion leading ( $r = .75$ ). PWB is negatively correlated with resistance to change ( $r = -.17$ ).

**Table 4.** *The Result of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Related to the Predictive Role of*

	B	Std. Err.	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	Zero order r	Partial r
Constant	6.08	2.01		3.03	.00		
Resistance to change	-2.96	0.42	-0.16	-6.97	.00	-.17	-.27
Risk taking	-0.07	0.37	-0.01	-0.19	0.85	.56	-0.01
Openness to experience	7.16	0.57	0.52	2.64	.00	.78	.45
Opinion leading	4.58	0.50	0.34	9.15	.00	.75	.34
R=.83		R <sup>2</sup> =.69					
F <sub>(4-630)</sub> = 343.30		p=.00					

According to Table 4, the result of the multiple linear regression analysis showed that the sub dimensions of IND-INO scales were significantly associated with PWB ( $R = .83$ ,  $R^2 = .69$ ,  $F(4-630) = 343.30$ ). The four dimensions (resistance to change, risk taking, openness to experience and opinion leading) as a whole accounted for 69 % of the total variance in counselor trainees PWB scores. According to the  $\beta$  value the order of relative importance of dimensions of IND-INO were openness to experience ( $\beta = .52$ ), opinion leading ( $\beta = .34$ ), risk taking ( $\beta = -.01$ ) and resistance to change ( $\beta = -.16$ ). The  $t$  test results regarding the significance of regression coefficients indicated that resistance to change ( $t = -6.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ), openness to experience ( $t = 2.64$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and opinion leading ( $t = 9.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were significantly predicted PWB, however risk taking ( $t = -.19$ ,  $p > .05$ ) didn't have an important effect on PWB.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Counselors should develop themselves in line with the needs of society accordingly. In counseling, innovation includes using new or updated counseling techniques, theories, practicing materials, evaluation inventory and technologies (Murray, 2009). Innovation in counseling education field is found as helpful to increase effectiveness (Weir, Pierce, & Lucey, 2014). As a process,

innovativeness and counseling shows similarities. Counseling process is innovative in its nature and it depends on IND-INO of counselors. In this study, identifying counselor trainees' psychological well-being (PWB) levels, individual innovativeness (IND-INO) levels, the distribution through innovativeness categories were aimed and the relationships between these traits were searched.

First of all, results indicate that IND-INO level of the counselor trainees was moderate. Most of the counselor trainees were at early majority category and early adopters category respectively. This result support other studies indicated that college students in Turkey are mostly at early majority category (Adiguzel, 2012; Cuhadar et. al, 2013; Gur Erdogan & Zafer Gunes, 2013; Kert & Tekdal, 2012; Kocak & Onen, 2012). It can be said that, as early major innovators, counselor trainees need time to adapt an innovation. As early adopters, they have potential to become opinion-leaders of the social system in Turkey. Moreover, they have potential to reduce uncertainty about innovation by informing and guiding their environment, and have potential to become a role model for the other individuals in our society. Most of the counselor trainees will work in schools as school counselors in our country. These innovativeness characteristics may help them in motivating either teachers and principals or students to form new opinions, innovative applications and also projects.

Secondly, the relationship between IND-INO levels and PWB levels of counselor trainees was statistically significantly positively correlated. There was only negative correlation between PWB levels of counselor trainees and resistance to change levels. This means that being resistant to changes decreases psychological wellbeing. Otherwise, we can say that, when the psychological well-being level increases, resistant to changes decreases. PWB is related to awareness of life purposes, skills and abilities, developing productive interpersonal relationships and maintaining them, having a positive sense of self, integrating oneself by accepting one's limitations, structuring environment according to personal needs and desires, being independent and entrepreneur, and self-growth (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryff, 2014). Multiple linear regression results showed that individual innovativeness characteristics explain 69% of the total variance of psychological wellbeing as a whole. Resistance to change, openness to experience and opinion leading were significantly predicted PWB, however risk taking didn't have an important effect on PWB. In literature we didn't reach studies which directly investigate the relations between individual innovativeness and psychological well-being; however there are some studies which indirectly showed that there may be relations between individual innovativeness and psychological well-being. For example, when openness to experience is handled as a personal trait or value, it is seen that having personal characteristic and value of openness to experience are positively related to psychological well-being (Saricaoglu, 2011; Telef, Uzman ve Ergün, 2013). It is indicated that creativity is a main element of being innovative. And research showed that creativity is related to subjective well-being which is an aspects of psychological well-being (Dolan & Metcalfe, 2012). Also, the people having high innovativeness have higher well-being level (Honkaniemi, Lehtonen ve Hasu, 2015). This study is the first attempt to explain the place of innovation and being innovative in counseling. Several important implications were reached for counseling: There found a striking resemblance between counseling and innovation process. Most of the counselor trainees were at early majority category and early adopters category respectively. They have potential to become opinion-leaders of the social system in Turkey. Besides, it was found that being resistant to changes decreases psychological well-being. Otherwise, we can say that, when the psychological well-being level increases, resistant to changes decreases. Individual innovativeness characteristics explain 69% of the total variance of psychological well-being as a whole. These results can be interpreted as being innovative and willingness to try new things are beneficial for one's mental health.

### **Limitations and Implications**

In this study, we handled psychological well-being (PWB) and individual innovativeness (IND-INO) as personality qualities which an effective counselor needs to possess to meet the expectancies of clients in new era. Moreover, we try to (1) figure out the similarities between counseling process and IND-INO process and (2) the congruency between PWB and IND-INO aspects for mental health. We can say that this was an initial study which aimed to compose a

theoretical framework about relations between PWB and IND-INO. Current results showed that these two constructs are relational theoretically but still there is need to confirm these theoretical relations and to identify other constructs which moderate the relation between these two constructs. Next studies can be done to determine how innovative personality traits help to maintain or enhance psychological well-being of counselor trainees.

In this study, the importance of individual innovation was revealed in terms of the mental health of counselor trainees. At this point, guidance and psychological counseling programs need to have directions that help to develop innovative character traits. Longitudinal studies may conduct to determine whether psychological counseling and guidance curricula contribute to the development of innovative personality traits of students, and psychological counseling and curriculums can be updated based on next findings. It is suggested that in the guidance and psychological counseling curriculum should be supplemented with courses that will help to develop and practice counselor trainees' creative thinking skills, creative and innovative personality traits.

We also think that it would be useful to examine the relationship between individual innovativeness and psychological well-being in psychological counselors who have been put into business life. Future studies may be based on mixed method. In the quantitative stage, the counselors who have high innovative characters may be determined. After that, in the qualitative stage, interviews can be conducted to reveal how counselors with innovative characteristics reflect these character traits to their professional lives, how they use innovative character traits to protect their psychological well-being. The innovative methods and techniques used by innovative psychological counselor can be examined. Possessing innovative character traits can play a role in preventing psychological counselors from experiencing professional burnout. Through qualitative studies, in future, it may be determined how innovative psychological counselors use innovative character traits to protect themselves from occupational exhaustion.

Present research have strengths in indicating that (1) counseling process and innovativeness process have similarities thus counseling is an innovative process in nature; (2) the psychological well being of people is positively related to their competence in innovativeness aspects.

Even though this study has strong sides, at the same time, it has some limitations. Firstly it was limited by data obtaining strategy since data were obtained by online in two mounts. Although we reach a high proportion of college student in counseling throughout the whole country, Turkey, if we give more time, we may reach more participant and the results may be more inclined to make generalization. Secondly, we used self-report scales. It's known that self-reported claims about personality may be misleading. Therefore, relying only on self-report statements may not be sufficient. Thirdly, we asked perception of general happiness and having a psychological problem or not by a questionnaire, further studies may use happiness scales.

Consequently, for effective counseling, counselor should have a healthy personality. Counselor trainees should be ready for the expectancies of the clients in new era. Actually cultural and gender role expectancies may have impacts on individual innovativeness levels and psychological well-being levels so these are suggested to be examined further. Moreover, teaching innovativeness is suggested to enhance the psychological and professional health of counselor trainees

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