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Predicting counselor candidates' altruism in Türkiye: The role of wellness, mindfulness, and gender

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess how well the wellness, mindfulness, and gender of counselor candidates could predict their level of altruism. A total of 357 senior students from Guidance and Psychological Counseling programs across 18 universities in various Turkish cities participated. The data were collected using the Personal Information Form, Altruism Scale, Well-Star Scale, and Mindfulness Scale. The results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicated that these variables collectively explained 24% of the variance in altruism. Wellness and gender emerged as significant predictors of altruism among the candidates, with wellness being the strongest predictor. Notably, wellness was positively associated with altruism, and female candidates scored higher in altruism than their male counterparts. However, mindfulness did not significantly influence the prediction of altruism. The study's results were examined in the context of the literature, and recommendations for counselor educators and researchers were provided based on these findings.

INTRODUCTION

Navigating the intricate blend of professional identity and personal attributes forms a complex aspect of a counselor's role (Corey, 2009). Counselors' personality traits significantly influence their helping styles (Çivitçi & Arıcıoğlu, 2012), among which traits like empathy, unconditional acceptance, genuineness, cultural competence, and a wellness-oriented perspective are crucial for fostering effective counseling relationships (Neukrug, 2012). Altruism, often hailed as the purest form of compassion (Robinson & Curry, 2005), stands out as a fundamental trait that supports counselors' objectives (Swank et al., 2013). Corey (2009) also emphasized that effective counselors genuinely prioritize the well-being of others.

Altruism is a crucial trait in the counseling profession and is vital for ensuring counselor effectiveness (Limberg et al., 2016). Flynn and Black (2011) highlight that altruism is important for fostering positive therapeutic relationships and ensuring that counselors can meet their clients' needs effectively. Similarly, Shapiro and Gabbard (1994) consider altruism to be a key trait in the counseling profession and support its increased presence in the academic literature. Given the crucial role of altruism in counseling, understanding the factors that predict altruistic behaviors among counselor candidates is essential, as this knowledge can help foster these qualities during professional training.

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The altruistic nature of counselors significantly enhances their helping relationships (Flynn & Black, 2011; Swank et al., 2012). In Türkiye, research on counselors or counselor candidates has predominantly focused on counselor education (Kağnıcı, 2013; Korkut-Owen & Mızıkacı, 2008), mindfulness (Bakioğlu, 2017), counseling skills (Atalay, 2019), and burnout. However, studies that specifically explore the altruism of counselor candidates are notably limited (Şakar, 2018). The current study raises awareness of altruism as a concept among professional staff and candidates, providing a deep understanding of the altruistic behaviors that foster the education of counselors.

On an international level, understanding the altruistic behaviors of counselors is crucial for developing effective training programs that are culturally sensitive and universally applicable. Research indicates that altruism and wellness are positively correlated across different cultural contexts, suggesting that fostering altruism in counselor training can enhance the overall effectiveness of counseling practices globally. For instance, studies have shown that engaging in altruistic behaviors can significantly improve both mental and physical health, enhancing life satisfaction and longevity (Post, 2005). Furthermore, mindfulness-based interventions have been found to improve psychological well-being, which in turn can foster altruistic behaviors (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Galante et al., 2014). Additionally, qualitative data collected from Indian and Italian participants revealed that altruism is perceived as human and social, emphasizing its relational and psychological features, although it can also lead to negative social evaluations such as criticism and isolation (Sharma & Bălţătescu, 2013). By contributing to this body of knowledge, the current study offers valuable insights that can be applied in diverse educational and professional settings worldwide.

Altruism is a personality trait that assists counselors in establishing therapeutic relationships and protecting themselves from the corrosive impacts of their profession. Since professional life is vulnerable to negative outcomes, such as burnout and secondary trauma, counselors need those characteristics that enhance their motivation to help them mitigate such risks (Limberg, 2013; Trippany et al., 2004). Limberg (2013) found that more altruistic counselors experience less burnout. Furthermore, a study revealed an inverse relationship between school counselors' well-being and burnout, showing that as their altruism increases, so does their wellness (Limberg et al., 2021). Investigating the factors that influence altruism can motivate mental health professionals to engage in activities that enhance their self-regulation and self-care.

Undergraduate education should not only increase counselor candidates' professional knowledge and skills but also support their altruism. It is recommended to explore the altruism of counselor candidates and its relationship with concepts such as mindfulness and well-being (Kasapoğlu, 2014; Schmuldt, 2006; Şakar, 2018). Given that counseling centers on helping others, examining the altruism levels of those in this profession is crucial (Ekşi et al., 2016). Research indicates that incorporating mindfulness and self-compassion into the curriculum can enhance counselors' empathy and professional competency, fostering a more effective therapeutic relationship (Greason & Cashwell, 2009). Additionally, developing altruism through empathy-focused training is essential, as it enhances the ability to engage in caring acts without expecting rewards (Swank et al., 2013). Mindfulness practices, which are associated with increased well-being and selflessness, can further promote altruistic behaviors (Hanley et al., 2017), thus enriching the educational experience and effectiveness of future counselors. Therefore, integrating these components into counseling programs internationally can significantly enhance both the personal and professional development of counselor candidates, helping them to better meet the needs of their clients.

In psychology, there is an increasing emphasis on considering the individual holistically. The World Health Organization (1948) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Bensley (1991) describes wellness as functionality across all social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual domains. Westgate (1996) views wellness as a

process in which individuals recognize their physical and emotional needs and structure their lives to fulfill them. The concept of wellness has become central to the study of healthy individuals' functionality (Westgate, 1996). Hettler (1980) identified domains such as physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, occupational, and social that contribute to optimal functioning. Additionally, the model developed by Witmer and Sweeney (1992) consider the impact of environmental factors and global events on wellness.

Wellness is critically important in the field of counseling. The well-being of an effective counselor is linked to both professional success and quality of life (Lawson & Myers, 2011; Neukrug, 2012). Witmer and Granello (2005) note that counselors with high well-being are more capable of enhancing the well-being of others. The concepts of wellness and altruism are closely intertwined. Kasapoğlu (2014) and Schwartz et al. (2008) identified a significant positive correlation between well-being and altruism. İşgör (2017) discovered a positive correlation between the psychological well-being and altruism of education and health workers in Türkiye, with those reporting higher job satisfaction also exhibiting more altruistic behaviors and greater well-being. However, additional research is required to investigate this dynamic relationship among counselor candidates.

Mindfulness entails focusing on the present moment, understanding the nature of this attention, and embracing the current experience without judgment (Atalay, 2019). The concept finds its roots in the Eastern Buddhist meditation tradition and is well studied and used, though quite substantially, in Western society (Atalay, 2019; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindfulness is defined as an ongoing procedure in which attention is given to inner and outer phenomena while allowing them to be distinguished so that stimuli can be left as is without becoming an item of attention (Westen, 1999). Other studies show how mindfulness powerfully promotes well-being and general health (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Galante et al., 2018) and helps self-regulation, protecting an individual from automatic thoughts and detrimental habits (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In addition, mindfulness is positively related to improvements in self-esteem (Randal et al., 2015; Thompson & Waltz, 2007) and emotion regulation skills (Hayes & Feldman, 2006; Jimenez et al., 2010).

A meta-analysis examining the impact of kindness-based meditation on health and well-being revealed positive effects on social interaction (Galante et al., 2014). A study on the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation to altruistic behaviors also revealed that those who were involved in this activity tended to donate more (Iwamoto et al., 2020). At this point, it is now evident that a relationship exists between mindfulness and both empathy and helping behaviors (Cameron & Fredrickson, 2015; Beitel et al., 2005; Dekeyser et al., 2008; Greason & Cashwell, 2009; Ridderinkhof et al., 2017). The findings suggest that mindfulness is an art that not only adds value to the inner world or outer world of an individual but also promotes altruistic activities such as empathy and the tendency to help others.

In a dictator game, Andreoni and Vesterlund (2001) randomly paired participants with no prior knowledge of each other, who would then decide the distribution of tokens that represented money. They found that while males were more likely to be at one extreme of the distribution—completely altruistic or completely selfish—females generally behaved more evenly. Kamas et al. (2008) reported that in the above dictator game, in which subjects make donations to charities without being paired, females acted more altruistically. For mixed-gender pairings, males increased their donations due to the social interaction effect. Branas-Garza et al. (2018) also noted that females were more altruistic than males and, surprisingly, that both gender expected females to behave more altruistically. Another study, which revealed no difference in the levels of altruism between genders, examined the altruism of counseling candidates (Şakar, 2018). Other studies on gender and altruism are contrasting, revealing, or inconclusive (Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Branas-Garza et al., 2018; Byrne, 2008; Kamas et al., 2008).

Based on the above explanations of the literature findings, we investigated the important variable of counselor education—altruism—with the help of wellness, mindfulness, and gender. By investigating these concepts together, this research study aimed to explain how these predictive variables predict

counselor candidates' altruism. In the present study, wellness, mindfulness, and gender were used as predictors of the altruistic behaviors of counselor candidates. To achieve this objective, the following research question was formulated: "To what extent do the mindfulness, wellness, and gender of counselor candidates predict their altruism?"

METHODS

Research Design

The present research adopts a quantitative approach under the correlational research model. In correlational research, a researcher assesses relations between variables without any manipulation of such variables by the researcher (Bordens & Abbott, 2018). The rationale for using this model is to ascertain how wellness, mindfulness, and gender might predict the altruism of counselor candidates. The existing relationships of these variables with each other help to determine the cues that lead to altruistic behavior in counselor education.

Participants

The study's participant group comprised 357 senior students enrolled in Guidance and Psychological Counseling undergraduate programs at 18 universities throughout Türkiye. Among the participants, 81% (n = 289) were female, and 19% (n = 68) were male. Their ages ranged from 20 to 35 years, with an average age of 22.55 years (SD = 1.58). Convenience sampling was employed to select the study participants. This research focused on fourth-year students to examine the effects of personal factors that might influence the development of altruism while controlling for the potential impact of their educational program on their capabilities in psychological help relationships. Another rationale for choosing senior students was that these individuals were likely to have engaged in at least one helping relationship. Data collection occurred in the final semester when students were taking the individual counseling practice course, ensuring that all participants had experience in at least one helping relationship.

Instruments

Personal Information Form. This form was prepared by the researchers to collect essential demographic data from the participants. This form is designed to gather information on the gender, age, university, and academic year of the counselor candidates participating in the study.

Altruism Scale. This scale was developed by Ümmet et al. (2013) for assessing the measurement of altruistic behavior in individuals within a cultural context. It includes 38 items with seven subdimensions: help in the educational process, help in traumatic situations, participation in volunteer activities, assistance to elderly people/patients, help based on physical strength, help arising from a sense of closeness, and financial help. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "1 = Strongly Disagree" to "5 = Strongly Agree". The more any participant scored within the scale pointed exactly to how much they could exhibit altruism. For the internal consistency reliability of the measure, as tested in the initial study by Ümmet et al. (2013), this coefficient alpha returned to .93. For the current research, raw total scores have been used in the analysis. The internal consistency reliability of the scale was re-established with the current data set, where a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92 was obtained, which confirmed the robustness of the scale in measuring altruism among the participants.

Well-Star Scale. This scale was developed by Korkut-Owen et al. (2016), is based on the wellness star model, and is devised to measure people's wellness. This scale contains five subdimensions, namely, the physical dimension, emotional dimension, social dimension, cognitive dimension, and a dimension focusing on making sense of life and goal orientation. The scale consists of a total of 24 items. Responses range from "1 = Does Not Reflect Me at All" to "5 = Completely Reflects Me." The total wellness score and scores on each subscale can be derived from responses, with a higher score indicating a higher level of wellness. In this study, the total scale score was used to analyze the data. The internal consistency

coefficient of Cronbach's alpha for the scale was found to be .84 when it was originally reported by Korkut-Owen et al. (2016). Reliability analysis carried out with the present data set, with a Cronbach's alpha of .85, confirming its usefulness in the measurement of wellness within this research context.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. This scale was developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) and is designed to measure the general tendency to be aware of and attentive to momentary experiences in daily life. The 15-item scale operates on a single-factor model. The Turkish adaptation was conducted by Özyeşil et al. (2011). High scores on this scale indicate that the individual has a high degree of mindfulness. The responses are given on a six-point Likert scale from "1 = Almost Always" to "6 = Almost Never." In this study, scores from the scale were used in the data analysis. In its original study, the internal consistency coefficient was reported as .80 with Cronbach's alpha for the Turkish adaptation study (Özyeşil et al., 2011). In this study, good reliability and effectiveness were demonstrated in the analysis of the data set for measuring mindfulness among the participants using a scale, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency of .84.

Data Collection Process

To gather the research data, the participants were administered the Personal Information Form, Altruism Scale, Well-Star Scale, and Mindfulness Attention Scale. Prior to initiating the data collection, permission was obtained from the original developers of these measurement tools and those who adapted them to Turkish for use in this study. Subsequently, ethical approval was granted by the Ankara University Ethics Committee, ensuring the study's adherence to research ethics.

The commencement of data collection aligned with the transition to distance education across universities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the data were initially collected online alongside an informed consent form presented digitally. However, due to the low participation rate in the online format, the researcher began to gather data in person during face-to-face classes. Necessary approval was obtained from the universities, and the Departments of Guidance and Psychological Counseling were contacted to start the data collection process with senior undergraduate students. Most of the data were collected face-to-face (number of face-to-face participants = 312, number of online participants = 49). Research from Weigold et al. (2013) and Ward et al. (2014) indicates that there are no significant differences in the outcomes of data collected online versus face-to-face, either quantitatively or qualitatively. To ascertain whether the method of data collection influenced the study results, analyses were conducted on the complete data set collected via both methods and solely on the face-to-face data. Given that there were no significant differences in the results, data from both collection methods were included in the final analysis to prevent data loss.

Data Analysis

We employed multiple linear regression analysis to assess the degree to which wellness, mindfulness scores, and gender could predict the altruism scores of counselor candidates. The data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS) (IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 26.0, Armonk, NY: IBM Corp. Released 2019. To validate the multiple linear regression analysis, we performed several assumption tests, including checks for sample size, missing and extreme value analyses, normal distribution, linearity, covariance, multicollinearity, and independence of prediction errors.

The original sample comprised 361 observations. For univariate outlier analysis, standardized z scores exceeding ±3.29 were considered outliers (Tabachnick et al., 2007). Using Mahalanobis distance values (Çokluk et al., 2018), no multivariate outliers were detected ($p < .001$). After removing four univariate outliers, the final sample size was adjusted to 357 participants. Regarding the sample size for multiple regressions, the formula 50 + 8m (where m represents the number of predictor variables) was used to confirm adequacy. We required at least 104 + m observations to test the predictor variables effectively (Tabachnick et al., 2007). Given the number of predictors, a minimum of 74 observations was

necessary to test multiple relationships, with 107 observations for each predictor variable. With a sample size of 357, these requirements were comfortably met.

For normality, the skewness and kurtosis values of the independent variables fell between -1 and +1, satisfying the normality assumption (Tabachnick et al., 2007). The normal distribution of residual errors was confirmed by examining the normal probability plot and histogram of standardized residuals, both of which supported the assumption of normality. Linearity was validated by the Q–Q plot.

Inspecting correlation values between predictor variables indicated no multicollinearity issues, being less than .80 for all the variables ($p < .05$) (Büyüköztürk, 2018). This was further confirmed by VIF values ranging from 1.06 to 1.28 and tolerance values ranging from .78 to .93; therefore, there was no issue with multicollinearity. The independence of prediction errors was checked by the Durbin-Watson (D-W) test statistic (Field, 2009), which yielded a D-W value of 2.5. In the current study, the assumption regarding the independence of prediction errors was upheld because the D-W value was within the acceptable range.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the Altruism Scale, Well-Star Scale, and Mindful Awareness Scale used in this study were presented in Table 1. For the "Altruism" scale, the statistics show a range of scores from a minimum of 84 to a maximum of 190, with a mean of 148.26 and a standard deviation of 19.98. The "Wellness" scale scores range from a minimum of 60 to a maximum of 120, with a mean of 92.61 and a standard deviation of 10.91. For the "mindfulness" variable, the scores vary from 22 as the minimum to 85 as the maximum, with a mean of 57.90 and a standard deviation of 11.96.

Table 1 <Descriptive Statistics for the Scales Used in the Study>

	n	***Min***	***Max.***	***Mean***	***SD***
Altruism	357	84	190	148.26	19.98
Wellness	357	60	120	92.61	10.91
Mindfulness	357	22	85	57.90	11.96

Predicting the Altruism of Counselor Candidates

Pearson correlation analysis was used to investigate how wellness and mindful awareness (the independent variables) were connected to counselor candidates' altruism (the criterion variable). The analysis results are shown in Table 2. The data indicated a moderately positive significant correlation between altruism and wellness ($r = .41$, $p < .01$). A lower but still positive significant correlation existed between wellness and mindful awareness ($r = .24$, $p < .01$). Since gender is a categorical variable, it was treated as a dummy variable in the analysis. The analysis showed that being female was positively associated with higher altruism levels. No significant correlation was found between mindfulness and altruism. The strongest significant relationship observed was between altruism and wellness, whereas the weakest was between wellness and mindfulness.

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to ascertain the degree to which mindful awareness, wellness, and gender collectively predict the altruism of counselor candidates. The findings of this analysis are displayed in Table 3. The multiple linear regression coefficients were found to be significant ($p < .001$, $R = .49$, $R2 = .24$), indicating that the predictor variables explained 24% of the variance in the criterion variable. The variables of wellness and gender significantly contributed to explaining the variance in altruism. Mindful awareness, however, did not significantly predict altruism. Examining the semi-partial correlation coefficients of the predictor variables, wellness was found to be the variable that most significantly explained altruism ($sr2 = .38$), followed by gender ($sr2 = .26$).

Table 2 <Correlations Among Research Variables>

Variables	**1**	**2**	**3**
Altruism	1.00		
Wellness	.41	1.00	
Mindfulness	.03	.24	1.00

$p < .01$

The findings from the multiple linear regression analysis showed that wellness and gender were significant predictors of altruism, while mindful awareness was not. Wellness accounted for the greatest proportion of the variance in altruism, followed by gender. A positive relationship was observed between wellness and altruism, with females exhibiting higher altruism scores.

Table 3 <Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Predicting Altruism>

Predictor	***B***	***SH$_B$***	***β***	***t***	***p***	***sr$_i^2$***
Constant	74.54	8.46		8.80	.00	
Wellness	.72	0.88	.39	8.28	.00	.38
Mindfulness	-.07	0.80	-.04	-.98	.32	-.04
Gender[a]	13.30	237	.26	5.60	.00	.26

Model: $R = .49$, $R^2 = .24$, $F(3, 353) = 37.35$, $p < .001$, [a]1= Female, 0 = Male

Discussion

The findings indicated that wellness and gender explained approximately one-fourth of the altruism exhibited by counselor candidates. It is well-documented that a more altruistic personality can facilitate the establishment of therapeutic relationships (Flynn & Black, 2011). The portion of altruism that remains unexplained could be attributed to other concepts related to altruism, such as empathy (Batson, 2011), attachment, forgiveness, lack of revenge (Ashton et al., 1998), and relational depth (Flasch et al., 2019).

The discovery of the positive and significant prediction of wellness on the part of counselor candidates toward their altruism posits that an increase in wellness on the part of these candidates likely enhances their contributions to the wellness of other persons. Conversely, it may also indicate that contributing to the wellness of others boosts the wellness of the counselors themselves. The literature supports the relationship between altruism and wellness (Kasapoğlu, 2014) and shows that engaging in altruistic behaviors contributes to one's own wellness and psychological health (Dulin et al., 2001; C. Schwartz et al., 2003; Schwartz et al., 2008). Given that altruistic behaviors enhance social cohesion, altruism is expected to have a positive impact on wellness. Witmer and Granello (2005) note that as counselors' wellness increases, their capacity to contribute to the well-being of others also grows. An international study on school counselors revealed that wellness is negatively associated with burnout and positively associated with altruism (Limberg et al., 2021). The results of this study showing that wellness predicts the altruism of counselor candidates align with these findings for school counselors. Improved wellness may help reduce burnout and foster more altruistic behaviors among counselors.

The significant prediction of gender in this study's multiple linear regression model suggested that being female was positively associated with altruistic behaviors. This is reflected in higher scores on the Altruism Scale among female counselor candidates than among their male counterparts. Numerous studies conducted on university students support the finding that altruism varies by gender, often favoring females (Acar & Apak, 2017; Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Boylu, 2020; Duman, 2021; Ekşi et al., 2016; Khalinbayli & Taş, 2019; Mert & Gülmez, 2018). These findings align with the results of the current study. However, some research contradicts these findings, indicating no significant gender differences in altruism levels (Ak, 2013; Bekil, 2019; Kasapoğlu, 2013; Şakar, 2018). For instance, Byrne (2008) found no significant differences in altruism between genders among helping professionals (such as those involved

in speech pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and education) based on quantitative data. Qualitatively, however, Byrne (2008) noted differences in the motivations for entering helping professions according to gender, with males often seeking social benefits and females focusing more on individual-level assistance. Eagly and Crowley (1986) discovered that males are more likely to assist strangers in dangerous situations, whereas females tend to provide protection and emotional support in safer contexts. This behavioral disparity can be attributed to traditional gender roles and societal expectations (Eagly, 1987, 2009), suggesting that gender influences altruistic behavior in specific situations. Kamas et al. (2008) observed that males are more altruistic in mixed-gender settings than are all-male groups, while females tend to behave altruistically in various situations. In addition, females have been found to be more altruistic in the works of Branas-Garza et al. (2018), while all the genders view females as more altruistic, a finding that could be seen as pointing toward complex gender dynamics and altruistic behavior.

Several previous studies have reported a contradictory effect of gender with respect to altruism. Researchers believe these differences are due to societal expectations, which are culturally, socioeconomically, and ethnically determined. These varied social expectations could account for the diversity in findings observed in different studies on altruism and gender. The outcome of the multiple linear regression analysis for this study is that among the three variables studied, only wellness and gender can significantly predict altruism, while mindfulness awareness is not a significant predictor. The percentage variance for predicting altruism is highest for wellness and second highest for gender. A positive relationship exists between wellness and altruism, with females generally scoring higher on their altruism scale than males. This again supports the assumption that societal norms and roles may have a bearing on altruistic behavior.

The results of the study show that mindfulness didn't significantly predict the altruism of counselor candidates. Furthermore, the correlation analysis that occurred prior to the multiple linear regression analysis likewise did not reveal any significant relationship between mindfulness and altruism. However, during the literature review, a significant positive relationship was found through other studies by Kivanç (2020) and Wallmark et al. (2013). In a parallel manner, Donald et al. (2018), in their systematic review and meta-analysis on the associations between mindfulness and prosocial behavior, reported that mindfulness had a positive association with prosocial behaviors across 31 studies consisting of 17,000 total participants. Prosocial behaviors increased in both trait mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions, implying that being mindful positively influences one's tendency to act altruistically. This contrast may suggest that the role of mindfulness in fostering the condition of altruism should be approached differently with reference to context or other, more specific characteristics of the populations under scrutiny.

Most experimental studies have shown that mindfulness practices have a positive effect on the level of altruism in individuals (Cameron & Fredrickson, 2015; Hutcherson et al., 2008; Iwamoto et al., 2020; Kristeller & Johnson, 2005; Lesh, 1970). Specifically, Condon et al. (2013) reported that compared to controls, individuals who practiced mindfulness and compassion-oriented meditation significantly increased their compassionate responses to suffering. In fact, an 8-week meditation course makes subjects more likely to act to help a person in pain than do the members of a control group. For example, Berry et al. (2018) experimentally examined the effects of mindfulness on prosocial behavior and established that while in this condition, there was an increase in prosocial behaviors, such as aiding and contributing—in turn presenting the argument that mindfulness begets increased empathy and altruism. These studies suggest that people generally tend to become more altruistic as they become more mindful. However, Xie et al. (2023) offered an interesting variation of their own, wherein mindfulness training selectively decreased altruistic behavior in low-cost situations and maintained it in high-cost situations, thus implying a more complex relationship between mindfulness and altruism. This is such a nuanced

finding and could account for the results obtained in the present study, where perhaps the relatively low cost that counselor candidates perceived in items on the Altruism Scale might have played a role in producing the nonsignificant predictive power of mindfulness on their altruism.

However, no study has specifically examined the relationship between mindfulness and altruism among counselor candidates. The special characteristic of the sample in this study could be the reason that mindfulness was not an essential factor for predicting altruism. Meanwhile, international studies on mindfulness and altruism generally demonstrate a significant relationship (Cameron & Fredrickson, 2015; Condon et al., 2013; Iwamoto et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2023). Furthermore, a cultural variable may play a role in the missing link between mindfulness and altruism in samples of counselor candidates from Türkiye. This means that the cultural context is important for these variables to be related to one another. It could be argued that the effects of mindfulness on altruistic behavior reveal themselves differently in varied cultural settings.

Related to the findings of the current research, Ilies et al. (2019) further found no significant relationship between situational mindfulness and altruism among participants who engaged in loving-kindness meditation and mindfulness meditation. In this regard, Ilies et al. (2019) suggested that this could be attributed to the relatively skewed gender distribution of their sample: 66 females and 14 males. Similarly, the findings of the current study could also be influenced by the gender distribution within the sample group, which suggests that gender differences possibly mediate the observed outcomes of studies on mindfulness and altruism.

However, the results cannot be exclusively related to gender differences. One of the limitations of this research is that it was carried out during the pandemic, which imposed limitations on socialization and the degree of interaction with the outside world. This, in turn, can potentially affect the levels of mindfulness of the candidates for a counselor. The effects of the pandemic on this research may have played out in the discovery of how mindfulness and altruism are expressed among the participants.

In this study, the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), adapted into Turkish by Özyeşil et al. (2011) to measure the mindfulness levels of counselor candidates, was criticized for being based on the constructs of situations that are opposite of mindfulness, such as the inability to focus to the moment, acting on autopilots, and absent-mindedness (Example item: "I have difficulty focusing on what is happening right now") (Grossman & Van Dam, 2013; Kırca, 2017). Furthermore, the scoring nomenclature of the MAAS—"1 = Almost Always" to "6 = Almost Never"—is fundamentally opposite to the nomenclature used in other scales being used in the study, in which high scores generally mean a higher frequency of occurrence, not a lower one. This mismatch of rating scales might have prompted participants to err in their markings. Mindfulness was also found to be related not only to altruism alone but also to psychological well-being (İşgör, 2017), social commitment, and empathy (Bekil, 2019), which are also related to either form or its facets (Aspy & Proeve, 2017; Birnie et al., 2010; Deniz et al., 2017). These relationships indicate that there should be a considerable impact of mindfulness on the prediction of altruism. Despite these connections, the findings of the present study indicate that mindfulness does not play a significant predictive role in the altruism of counselor candidates. This result could be attributed to various factors, including the characteristics of the participants, the impact of pandemic conditions, the nature of the MAAS items measuring constructs contrary to mindfulness, or inconsistencies in the rating scale compared to other scales used in the study. These elements highlight the complexity of accurately measuring and interpreting the influence of mindfulness on altruistic behavior.

Implications for Counselors, Counselor Educators, and Supervisors

The core of the counseling profession is centered on helping others, and altruism, defined as the selfless tendency to assist others, is integral to this field. As a personality trait, altruism is believed to significantly enhance job satisfaction among counselors. The finding that wellness influences levels of

altruism indicates that investing in wellness can indirectly boost counselors' job satisfaction. Therefore, it is advisable for counselors to engage in a variety of activities that nurture and enhance their overall wellness. To effectively support their wellness, counselors should focus on several key dimensions: physical, psychological/emotional, social, intellectual/occupational, and spiritual. By addressing these areas, counselors can maintain a balanced and fulfilling professional life.

Although this study's findings suggest that mindful awareness does not significantly predict altruism, the literature highlights that mindfulness activities can enhance levels of altruism. Given this context, counselors might find it beneficial to incorporate mindfulness practices into their routines to maintain and improve their altruistic behaviors. Engaging in meditation practices, for instance, can be a valuable part of their self-care regimen and help to boost their mindfulness, thereby potentially increasing their capacity for altruism.

It is advisable for counselor educators and supervisors to design and implement activities and projects that nurture the altruistic nature of counselor candidates and increase the frequency of altruistic behaviors. Encouraging engagement in these activities can significantly enhance the level of altruism among future counselors. Considering the demonstrated relationship between wellness and altruism in this study, it is recommended that both in-class and extracurricular activities that promote the wellness of counselor candidates be integrated into undergraduate counseling programs. Doing so not only furthers their personal development but also equips them to cope effectively with one of the critical occupational hazards of counselors, i.e., burnout. Furthermore, life skills educative programs and those based on teaching multifaceted skills should be organized in undergraduate curricula. These programs would be vital for improving the wellness of trainee counselors and would also prime them to handle their personal and professional stressors in a better way.

Incorporating the wellness star model in the undergraduate curriculum would favor counselor candidates, as they can enact and develop their capabilities in all dimensions of well-being: physical, psychological/emotional, social, intellectual/occupational, and spiritual. This will be a holistic approach to enable them to balance their professional and personal life, which is important for a sustained long-term career in the domain of counseling. Additionally, the finding that female counselor candidates seem to be more altruistic in nature would suggest the need for more detailed support from male counselor candidates in developing such behaviors. Counselor educators should further develop and put in practice additional supportive activities or interventions within the undergraduate training process to enhance the level of altruism among male candidates. Such tailored interventions could address any underlying factors that contribute to differences in altruism between genders and help ensure that all candidates are equally prepared to serve their future clients effectively.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

The sampling method utilized in this research ensures that the results can be generalized to the participants of the study and individuals with similar characteristics. However, as this is a cross-sectional study, the findings cannot establish cause-and-effect relationships. Future studies could enhance the generalizability of the results by employing larger sample groups. Additionally, longitudinal studies would allow for a clearer determination of cause-effect relationships and enable the analysis of changes over time. It is also important to consider international differences when evaluating the findings. For instance, Guidance and Psychological Counseling programs in Türkiye are typically conducted at the undergraduate level, whereas in the United States, they are at the graduate level. International comparisons could thus provide a deeper understanding of how differences in educational levels affect outcomes. Moreover, the significant gender imbalance in the participant group (81% female, 19% male) and the impact of data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic are notable limitations of this study. To clarify the impact of gender, future research could be conducted with a more gender-balanced sample. Additionally, the

absence of a variable to control for the effects of the pandemic suggests that the findings should be interpreted with these limitations in mind. To assess the effects of the pandemic more accurately, it would be beneficial to compare the data from this study with data collected a few years post-pandemic. This approach could help delineate any long-term effects of the pandemic on the variables studied.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of wellness and gender in predicting counselor trainees' altruism. It also underlines the importance of including these factors in counselor education programs. The positive correlation between well-being and altruism suggests that increasing counselors' wellness can significantly improve their altruistic behaviors, which are necessary for effective therapeutic relationships (Witmer & Granello, 2005). Furthermore, observed gender differences in altruistic behaviors, with female exhibiting higher levels, highlight the need for targeted interventions to promote altruism among all counselor candidates. In addition, the findings of this study contribute to understanding the complex relationship between mindfulness and altruistic behaviors and provide directions for future research. In conclusion, this study encourages the development of holistic training programs that nurture both the professional and personal development of counselor candidates.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

This study is based on the first author's master's thesis completed at Ankara University under the supervision of the second author. All authors have agreed on the final version of the paper.

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