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## **MINDFULNESS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELOR EDUCATION**

*(Research article)*

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# MINDFULNESS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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## Abstract

Mindfulness, an essential concept in psychological counseling education, includes focusing the individual's attention and being aware of their experiences in the present. Psychological counselor candidates with a high level of mindfulness can be an excellent advantage for themselves and their clients to gain this skill while working as field experts. In this context, this study examines the counselor candidates' mindfulness in counselor education and the relations between self-knowledge and mindfulness. Regarding this aim, we conducted the research with 309 psychological counselor candidates continuing their education at xx University, the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling. We used the Integrative Self-Knowledge Scale and the Toronto Mindfulness Scale for data collection. Results showed positive and significant correlations between the self-knowledge of the counselor candidates and their mindfulness. Another finding revealed that the curiosity sub-dimension of mindfulness was a significant predictor of the self-knowledge of counselor candidates. Findings revealed that mindfulness and self-knowledge differed statistically significantly regarding gender and grade level. These results underline that mindfulness, which is influential in developing dimensions such as therapeutic communication and social skills, should be included in counselor training.

*Keywords:* mindfulness, self-awareness, counselor training

## 1. Introduction

Psychological counseling helps individuals who are inadequate in solving the problems they try to cope with in daily life to solve their problems by using various therapeutic techniques and raising awareness among their clients (Cormier & Hackney, 2005). From this point of view, one can assume that psychological counselors support clients in identifying the source of their problems, realizing solutions to their problems, and autonomously finding their solution mechanisms (Corey, 2008). While doing all these, the psychological counseling process aims to raise client awareness. For counselors to improve their clients' skill levels, mindfulness is high in many aspects, such as resources, counseling self-efficacy, and awareness of their skills. Therefore, psychological counsellors' high level of mindfulness may contribute to gaining this skill in the counseling sessions they will carry out for their clients.

Interest in mindfulness-based therapies in psychological counseling has increased in recent years (Cash & Whittingham, 2010). Mindfulness-based interventions are considered by Hayes (2004) as the "third wave" of the cognitive behavioral approach. The therapy approaches, described as the third wave, use methods such as acceptance and cognitive defusion in mindfulness, focusing on understanding the event's function and changing it rather than changing it (Teasdale et al., 2003). Mindfulness includes the individual's being aware of his recent experiences and being able to include himself in these experiences (Coffey & Hartman, 2008). In this respect, it is known that individuals with a high level of mindfulness have a high level of focus and awareness only for the present moment, without being influenced by past or

future events (Bishop et al., 2004). A counselor with high mindfulness can accept the client's problems and the client without judgment and can help the client increase their awareness to identify the source of their problems and find solutions. In this respect, the high awareness of the counselor can both increase the quality and efficiency of the counseling process and provide a benefit for the client to develop their awareness and reach a better level in skill training.

Individuals with high mindfulness can focus on the present moment and focus on the time and event without judgment (Coffey & Hartman, 2008). Shapiro et al. (2007) revealed that mindfulness-based stress reduction programs in the training of therapists helped therapists reduce their negative affect, stress, rumination, state, and trait anxiety and produced significant increases in positive affect and self-compassion. In addition, another result demonstrated that the awareness of the therapists participating in the mindfulness-based stress reduction program increased.

Psychological counselors can work in public and private education institutions affiliated with the National Education with the title of guidance teacher from pre-school to high school level and support students in solving their educational, professional, and personal-social problems. It provides a psychological assistance service to students who apply for it in line with their professional qualifications for curative, preventive, or crisis-oriented guidance types for the problems they experience. In this direction, the level of mindfulness that the counselor candidates have, as well as their professional knowledge and skills, can have a substantial effect on helping their clients and gaining this skill. Studies show that psychological counselors with high awareness also have high mindfulness and counseling self-efficacy (Akşab & Türk, 2022; Chan et al., 2021; Ender et al., 2019). Psychological counselors, who are in a position to provide these skills to students, can be expected to have high self-knowledge and mindfulness so that students can develop an awareness of the problems they experience and their solutions.

When considering multicultural counseling competencies, when working with clients from different cultures, counselors are expected to accept the cultural characteristics of clients without judgment and tolerate these differences without harming the counseling process (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Greason & Cashwell, 2009). As mentioned above, acceptance can be associated with the psychological counselor's high awareness of themselves and the present moment. In studies on cultural sensitivity, it has been determined that there is a significant relationship between the high awareness of counselors and their self-efficacy (Bakioğlu, 2017). These results underline that psychological counselors' awareness contributes to the efficient functioning of the counseling process and will positively contribute to their clients while performing skill training.

This study has evaluated mindfulness in terms of the concepts defined as integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness dimensions in the literature. The following section contains information about these dimensions:

### **1.1. Self-Knowledge and Mindfulness**

Mindfulness includes the individual's awareness of and accepting those experiences without judging the experiences he or she has experienced in a certain period (Greason & Cashwell, 2009). In this respect, the individual must focus on what they live in the moment and be aware of it, rather than focusing on the past or the future, both for himself and others and his experiences.

Mindfulness is considered a concept associated with "consciousness" and is accepted as a necessary dimension for the development and maturation of people from a psychological point of view. "Psychological consciousness" is explained by the ability of people to be aware of the interaction between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, to decenter and examine

themselves, and to have the ability to think about themselves so that they can understand the causes of their own lives and behaviors (Appelbaum, 1973). This concept, which is considered psychological consciousness, is expressed with concepts such as "insight," "introspection," and "self-knowledge" in the related literature. Hall (1992) states that "psychological consciousness" is the willingness to think about relationships, meanings, and psychological processes and the ability to perform this operation. Self-knowledge, a prerequisite for psychological consciousness, is the individual's consciousness of what has happened in the past, lived in the present, and can be experienced in the future (Beitel et al., 2005). Gough (1975), who expands the concept of awareness more, emphasizes that one should be able to provide awareness of one's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in other people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. This expanded version of the definition shows us that the concept of awareness parallels the process goals of psychotherapy.

Mindfulness is considered one of the competencies expected in the client and the counselor in successful psychotherapy (Daw & Joseph, 2010). From this point of view, both the fact that self-knowledge requires the individual to be aware of the processes taking place in the mind at that moment and its evaluation as an essential concept in psychotherapy makes it necessary to examine the concept of mindfulness, which is another related concept (Fenigstein, 1997; Horowitz, 2002). The point is that these concepts differ, and it would be wrong to use them interchangeably (Beitel et al., 2005).

While self-knowledge is a situation associated with consciousness, wise awareness (mindfulness) is considered one of the most fundamental and latent therapeutic change processes (Fletcher et al., 2010). Mindfulness includes awareness of the individual's characteristics and remote viewing, curiosity, openness, compassion, and understanding (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In this context, individuals with mindfulness can focus their attention by directing them to a specific goal and being aware. At the same time, an individual who acts with mindfulness directs his attention to the experiences experienced in the body and mind at that moment and examines the observation results obtained curiously without judging, analyzing, and reacting. In addition, it can be said that mindfulness is an experiential process that includes accepting the experiences experienced at the moment with understanding and compassion (Hisli -Şahin & Yeniceri, 2015).

Mindfulness consists of two components: decentering and curiosity. Curiosity is a component that helps individuals to determine what their thoughts and feelings are and to be aware of these thoughts and feelings. Curiosity is effective in helping people understand and recognize the reasons underlying their reactions to events. Curiosity also helps individuals realize what they pay more attention to in a particular event or situation and helps them learn more about themselves. Another component, decentering, involves individuals making decisions independently, without being influenced by emotions, thoughts, personality traits, reactions to events and experiences, and recognizing them. Individuals with high levels of decentering focus on accepting their experiences as they occur without judgment, evaluating their feelings and thoughts independently and accepting their experiences as they are instead of controlling them (Lau et al., 2006).

Two primary ecols deal with the concept of mindfulness. In one of these ecols, Langer (1989) defined it as a conscious mental state unrelated to Eastern philosophies and a mental process that reveals flexibility and productivity by minimizing the automatic response to external stimuli and being open to current experiences. In another ecol, Kabat-Zinn (2003) considers it an intervention method that can be taught and learned, arising from integrating Eastern and Western philosophy. Kabat-Zinn (2003) considers mindfulness a mental process

that the individual activates to internal and external stimuli at that time, away from criticism and judgment, with curiosity, understanding, compassion, and acceptance.

Research results demonstrated that mindfulness-based intervention programs boosted the counselor candidates' empathy and multicultural counseling self-efficacy. Consistent with this information, Ivers et al. (2016) examined mindfulness and multicultural counseling competence related to one another. The study's findings showed that after controlling for race/ethnicity, taking a multicultural course, and empathy, aspects of mindfulness were associated with multicultural awareness and multicultural knowledge. Pearson (2020) conducted a qualitative study applying a thematic analysis with 53 post-graduate counseling interns who participated in piloting an eight-week mindfulness challenge. The study revealed six themes the variety of mindfulness activities, insights about self and mindfulness, observations of self, hindrances to practice, outcomes from participation, and advice for others. According to intern reports, learning mindfulness was challenging. It could be explored through various activities, and for most people, practicing mindfulness helped them become more self-aware than those who are not mindful. Bohecker & Doughty Horn (2016) indicated that mindfulness-based experiential small group activities increased students' empathy and counseling self-efficacy. Campbell et al. (2018) examined the relationships between mindfulness and multicultural counseling competencies in counselor trainees and concluded that mindful individuals tended to think of themselves as more multi-culturally competent.

In an effective counseling process, the self-knowledge of the counselor is expected to be high (Corey, 2008). In addition, in the evaluation process, the client shows interest in what he tells and accepts what is told with unconditional acceptance without judgment; mindfulness is essential in the therapeutic relationship (Nutt-Williams, 2008). Similarly, the level of awareness that the counselor has while teaching mindfulness-based activities to his clients and assisting their emotion regulation processes will also positively affect this teaching process. Gaining different perspectives to the client in the counseling process is among the process objectives, and it is expected that the awareness of the consultant and the client about the present moment is high. For this reason, self-knowledge and mindfulness are characteristics that psychological counselors and candidates should have. It is essential for institutions that train psychological counselors to consider these concepts as teachable and learnable. For this reason, determining the extent of mindfulness to psychological counselor candidates is helpful for researchers and practitioners to consider mindfulness since it can be considered when organizing skills training later. For this purpose, in this study, the relationship between integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness of counselor candidates studying in the Guidance and Psychological Counseling program of xx University and the moderator role of gender in this relationship was examined. In line with this primary purpose, answers to the following fundamental questions were sought:

1. Is there a significant relationship between integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness of counselor candidates?
2. Does counselor candidates' mindfulness significantly predict their integrative self-knowledge?
3. Do the mindfulness and self-awareness of counselor candidates differ regarding gender?
4. Do the mindfulness and self-awareness of counselor candidates differ regarding class?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Designs**

This research was carried out following the relational research approach. This study adopted the relational approach because the relationships between counselor candidates' integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness were examined. In this approach, the relationships between two or more variables are tried to be determined, and the relationships between the variables are analyzed in depth (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Mertens, 2015).

### **2.2. Participants**

Participants consist of 309 psychological counselor candidates continuing their education in xx University Education Faculty Guidance and Psychological Counseling Program. Regarding gender, 194 (62.8%) were female, and 115 (37.2%) were male. The mean age of the participants was 20.19, and the standard deviation was 1.47. Regarding grade level, 57 (18.4%) of the participants attend 1st grade, 75 (24.3%) 2nd grade, 93 (30.1%) 3rd grade and 84 (27.2%) 4th grade.

### **2.3. Data Collection Tools**

This study used Personal Information Form, Integrative Self-Knowledge Scale, and Toronto Mindfulness Scale as data collection tools.

#### **2.3.1. Personal Information Form**

It is the form prepared by the researchers to obtain the gender, age, and class information of the participants.

#### **2.3.2. Integrative Self-Knowledge Scale**

Integrative Self-Knowledge Scale, developed by Ghorbani et al. (2008) and adapted into Turkish by Hisli-Şahin and Yeniceri (2015), aims to measure integrative self-knowledge, which is an integrated version of one's past, present, and future insights/perceptions about themselves. The scale consists of 12 items and one dimension and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Nine of the 12 items were reverse-scored. The minimum score is 12, and the maximum score is 60. A higher score on the scale is associated with individuals' higher integrative self-knowledge about their past, present, and future. The internal consistency coefficient calculated to determine the scale's reliability was .76.

#### **2.3.3. Toronto Mindfulness Scale**

Lau et al. (2006) developed it, and Hisli-Şahin and Yeniceri (2015) adapted it to Turkish aim to measure individuals' mindfulness. The scale is scored in a 5-point Likert type and consists of 13 items and two sub-dimensions: decentering and curiosity. The minimum score is 13, and the maximum score is 65. In the original form of the scale, there is no reverse-scored item. A higher score on the scale is associated with higher mindfulness. The values obtained as a result of the analyzes regarding the validity of the scale were found to be acceptable ( $\chi^2/df = 1.99$ , RMSEA = .05, AGFI = .94, GFI = .96, CFI = .90, IFI = .90). The internal consistency coefficient calculated to determine the reliability of the scale was found to be .58 for the total of the scale, .71 for the decentering sub-dimension, and .40 for the curiosity sub-dimension, respectively.

### **2.4. Data Collection Procedure**

Ethics committee approval was obtained for the research before the data collection phase of the study was carried out. Then, the data collection tools were added to Google Forms. The online form was sent to the psychological counselor candidates from the student information

system as the undergraduate education was continued remotely. For this, help was received from the faculty members who attended the courses of the psychological counselor candidates, and the link containing the data collection tools was sent to the students so they could respond to the data collection tools. Data collection was completed in one week.

## 2.5. Data Analysis

Since the data were collected online, it was mandatory to answer the items, and after marking the items on a scale, they were allowed to proceed to the next screen. In this way, there was no lost data. Before starting the analysis of the data obtained in the research, the suitability of the data for parametric analysis was examined with univariate and multivariate normality assumptions.

Univariate normality was determined by examining the skewness and kurtosis values. Since the skewness and kurtosis values were between -1.5 and 1.5, the data was decided to have a univariate normal distribution (Tabachnick et al., 2007). We followed Tabachnick et al. (2007) and Kline's (2011) suggestions to determine multivariate normality. For this, Mahalanobis, VIF, and Tolerance values were examined. At the same time, in the established regression model, the significance level of the Mahalanobis value should be below .01 due to the analysis (Tabachnick et al., 2007). As a result of the examinations, it was seen that the data had a normal distribution. After determining the data's univariate and multivariate normality, parametric analyses, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis were used to determine the relationships between the variables. Analyses were carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 26 package program.

## 2.6. Ethics and Procedure

Before the data collection phase of the research was carried out, the decision of the xx University Educational Sciences Unit Ethics Committee was taken into consideration, and it was determined that the research was ethically appropriate according to the decision dated 25.05.2023 and numbered 06-45.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Findings on the Relationship Between Integrative Self-Knowledge and Mindfulness

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was performed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness, and the results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *The relationship between integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness*

	1	2	3	4
1. Integrative Self-Knowledge Scale (ISKS) Total Score	-			
2. Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS) Total Score	.29*	-		
3. Decentering Sub-Dimension of TMS	-0.03	.73*	-	
4. Curiosity Sub-Dimension of TMS	.44*	.71*	0.03	-
$\bar{X}$	42.09	44.55	21.4	23.15
SD	5.26	4.2	2.95	2.89
Skewness	-0.18	0.11	-0.03	0.09
Kurtosis	0.74	-0.05	0.82	-0.31

Note. \*  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 309$

It is seen that there are positive and significant relationships between the total score of the integrative self-knowledge scale and the total score of the Toronto mindfulness scale ( $r = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the sub-dimension of curiosity ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, it was determined that there was no significant relationship between the total score of the integrative self-knowledge scale and the decentering sub-dimension of the Toronto mindfulness scale ( $r = -.03$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

### 3.2. Predictive Relationships between Integrative Self-Knowledge and Mindfulness

We performed multiple regression analyses to determine whether mindfulness components significantly predict integrative self-knowledge. Table 2 demonstrates the regression analysis results:

Table 2. Regression analysis results on the prediction of integrative self-knowledge

Model	Unstandardized estimates		Standardized estimates	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
	B	SE	$\beta$			
(Constant)	23.35	2.17	-	10.75	0	
1 Curiosity Sub-Dimension of TMS	0.81	0.09	0.44	8.69	0	0.2
Decentering Sub-Dimension of TMS	-0.08	0.09	-0.04	-0.85	0.39	

Note. N = 309, TMS = Toronto Mindfulness Scale

As a result of the multiple regression analysis performed to determine whether mindfulness is a significant predictor of integrative self-knowledge, it was determined that only the curiosity sub-dimension of the Toronto mindfulness scale is a significant predictor of integrative self-knowledge. When the unstandardized regression coefficients are examined, it is revealed that as the scores from the curiosity sub-dimension of the Toronto mindfulness scale increase, the scores from the integrative self-knowledge scale also increase ( $B = .81$ ,  $SE = .09$ ). Toronto mindfulness scale. It is seen that the scores obtained from the curiosity sub-dimension explain 20% of the change in integrative self-knowledge.

### 3.3. Findings Related to Integrative Self-knowledge and Mindfulness Differentiation by Gender

In order to determine the level of significant differentiation of mindfulness and integrative self-knowledge according to gender, t-test analysis was performed for independent samples, and the results are given in Table 3:

Table 3. Results of t-test analysis of integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness differentiation by gender

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE <sub>(mean)</sub>	t	$\eta^2$
Integrative Self-Knowledge Total Score	Female	194	41.71	5.4	0.39	-1.64	-
	Male	115	42.72	4.97	0.46		
Toronto Mindfulness Total Score (TMS)	Female	194	44.84	4.25	0.31	1.58	-
	Male	115	44.06	4.09	0.38		
Decentering Sub-Dimension of TMS	Female	194	21.74	2.94	0.21	2.69*	0.02
	Male	115	20.82	2.9	0.27		
Curiosity Sub-Dimension of TMS	Female	194	23.1	2.92	0.21	-0.43	-
	Male	115	23.24	2.84	0.26		

Note. \*  $p < .05$



When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the scores of the decentering sub-dimension of the psychological counselor candidates differ statistically significantly only regarding gender without affecting Toronto mindfulness ( $t = 2.69, p < .05$ ). The total score of the counselor candidates from the integrative self-knowledge scale ( $t = -1.64, p > .05$ ) and the Toronto mindfulness total score ( $t = 1.58, p > .05$ ) and the Toronto mindfulness curiosity sub-dimension score ( $t = -.43, p > .05$ ) did not differ significantly by gender. In order to determine which group caused the difference, the average scores obtained from the Toronto mindfulness scale without being affected by the sub-dimension were examined. Accordingly, female counselor candidates' average scores were higher than male counselors. When the effect size was calculated, it was observed that the differentiation was low ( $\eta^2 = .02$ ).

### 3.4. Findings Related to Integrative Self-Knowledge and Mindfulness Differentiation by Grade Level

One-way ANOVA analysis of variance was performed for independent samples to determine the level of significant differentiation between mindfulness and integrative self-knowledge according to grade level, and the results are given in Table 4:

Table 4. *One-way analysis of variance results in integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness differentiation by grade level*

		N	Mean	SD	SE	Min.	Max.	F	$\eta^2$	Difference
ISKTS	1st Class	57	41.32	4.97	.66	30.00	55.00	5.15*	.05	1-4
	2nd Class	75	40.79	5.00	.58	29.00	52.00			
	3rd Class	93	42.05	4.97	.52	30.00	60.00			
	4th Class	84	43.81	5.59	.61	23.00	55.00			
	Total	309	42.09	5.26	.30	23.00	60.00			
TMSTS	1st Class	57	43.63	4.26	.56	35.00	54.00	3.32*	.03	1-4
	2nd Class	75	44.64	4.21	.49	35.00	55.00			
	3rd Class	93	44.05	3.75	.39	33.00	53.00			
	4th Class	84	45.64	4.45	.49	36.00	56.00			
	Total	309	44.55	4.20	.24	33.00	56.00			
DTMS	1st Class	57	21.54	3.17	.42	13.00	29.00	2.34	-	-
	2nd Class	75	22.08	3.01	.35	14.00	32.00			
	3rd Class	93	20.91	2.66	.28	10.00	26.00			
	4th Class	84	21.23	3.00	.33	15.00	28.00			
	Total	309	21.40	2.95	.17	10.00	32.00			
CTMS	1st Class	57	22,097	2.94	.39	16.00	29.00	9.78*	.09	1-4
	2nd Class	75	22.56	2.47	.29	17.00	29.00			
	3rd Class	93	23,148	2.85	.30	17.00	30.00			
	4th Class	84	24,427	2.82	.31	17.00	30.00			
	Total	309	23.15	2.89	.16	16.00	30.00			

*Note.* ISKTS = Integrative Self-Knowledge Total Score, TMSTS = Toronto Mindfulness Scale Total Score, DTMS = Decentering Sub-Dimension of Toronto Mindfulness Scale, CTMS = Curiosity Sub-Dimension of Toronto Mindfulness Scale

Table 4 indicates the Toronto mindfulness scale total score ( $F = 3.32, p < .05$ ) and Toronto mindfulness scale curiosity sub-dimension scores ( $F = 9.78, p < .05$ ) of the counselor candidates differ statistically according to grade level. In addition, it is seen that the total score of integrative self-knowledge ( $F = 5.15, p < .05$ ) differs statistically significantly according to the grade level. However, it was observed that the sub-dimension of following unaffected by

the Toronto mindfulness scale did not differ statistically significantly according to the grade level of the counselor candidates ( $F = 2.34, p > .05$ ).

The results of the Tukey test, which was conducted to determine which group caused the difference in the Toronto mindfulness scale total score, showed that the average score of the fourth graders was higher than the first graders. When the effect size was calculated, it was observed that the differentiation was low ( $\eta^2 = .03$ ). The results of the Tukey test, which was conducted to determine which group caused the difference in the Toronto mindfulness scale curiosity sub-dimension score, showed that the average score of the fourth graders was higher than the first, second and third grades. When the effect size was calculated, it was seen that the variation was moderate ( $\eta^2 = .09$ ). Tukey test results, which were conducted to determine which group caused the difference in the total score of integrative self-knowledge, showed that the average score of the fourth graders was higher than the first and second grades. When the effect size was calculated, it was observed that the differentiation was low ( $\eta^2 = .05$ ).

#### **4. Discussion**

According to the findings obtained from the research, a positive and significant relationship was found between the total score of the mindfulness of the counselor candidates and the sub-dimension of curiosity and the total score of integrative self-knowledge. It has been determined that the curiosity sub-dimension of mindfulness is a significant predictor of integrative self-knowledge. The findings obtained as a result of the research support similar research results in the literature.

The study's first finding is that there is a positive and significant relationship between the total score of mindfulness of the counselor candidates and the sub-dimension of curiosity and the total score of integrative self-knowledge. There are various studies in which the results of the research conducted with psychological counselors are parallel to the results of the current research (Amin et al., 2020; Kashdan et al., 2011; Lau et al., 2006; McDonough & Lemon, 2018). In the literature, individuals who score high in the curiosity dimension of mindfulness are defined as individuals who consciously manage attention, are aware of emotions, thoughts, and sensations, are not affected by them, and have a high sense of curiosity about their experiences at the moment (Lau et al., 2006). Individuals who consciously direct their attention and act with curiosity about their experiences in line with the findings can also increase their awareness of their competencies and discover their characteristics. In addition, the curiosity sub-dimension of mindfulness is also evaluated as an attitude toward openness and unconditional acceptance (Lau et al., 2006). From this point of view, the ability of the individual to approach the events with a curious, open, and unconditionally accepting style and deal with what the person is in contact with in a way that is free from judgment and criticism makes it possible for the individual to be more effective in dealing with difficult situations. It can be said that it provides support for the individual to put aside his feelings, thoughts, and attitudes, to focus on the problematic situation he encounters, and to be able to act effectively in providing control by producing alternative solutions more comfortably (Appelbaum, 1973). In this context, the height of the mindfulness of psychological counselors can feed the sense of curiosity in discovering their strengths and weaknesses. In this way, individuals can be more aware of their characteristics.

According to another finding of the study, it was observed that the mindfulness of the counselor candidates was a significant predictor of the integrative self-knowledge of the curiosity sub-dimension. The literature has research findings supporting this finding (Carlson, 2013; Kashdan et al., 2011; Niemiec et al., 2010). Different results in the literature show that self-knowledge and mindfulness are different. Beitel et al. (2005) revealed that these concepts are different. However, the current research supports the results of previous studies in the

literature that reveal significant predictive relationships between the curiosity sub-dimension of mindfulness and self-knowledge. Through curiosity, individuals are motivated to discover themselves and their world, thus expanding their knowledge and skills (Lau et al., 2006). Therefore, individuals with a high sense of curiosity about their past, present and future lives can develop more awareness of their characteristics to discover the features in their selves and replace their negative features with positive ones. In this context, individuals can reach higher self-knowledge by increasing their sense of curiosity.

In another finding obtained from the research, it was observed that the mindfulness and integrative self-knowledge of the counselor candidates differed significantly according to gender. Findings revealed that female counselor candidates had higher average scores than male counselors. This finding from the research supports the results of other research on the subject in the literature (Arslan, 2018; Bluth et al., 2017; Wang & Chopel, 2017). Through their training, female counselors may have discovered more about their characteristics, counseling self-efficacy, and being a counselor. They may have increased their self-knowledge more than men. Women may have developed a different understanding of discovery, curiosity, and awareness than men. Therefore, they may have become more aware of themselves and have developed their mindfulness more.

Another study found that the counselor candidates' mindfulness and integrative self-knowledge differed significantly according to the grade level. The findings revealed that the average scores of the counselor candidates studying in the third and fourth years in the first year were higher than those of the counselor candidates studying in the third and fourth years. This finding obtained as a result of the research supports the results of other research on the subject in the literature (Acar & Eker, 2019; Kocaarslan, 2016; Özsoy & Günidi, 2011; Topal et al., 2021). Psychological counselor candidates mostly see standard compulsory and general culture courses in the first years of undergraduate education. In the second, third, and fourth years, they encounter content specific to the field, such as psychological counseling principles and techniques, psychological counseling skills, and counseling theories. The courses aim to raise awareness for counseling. At the same time, he may have discovered his characteristics through theoretical and practical training in these courses and improved their self-knowledge by discovering their awareness of the psychological counseling process.

#### **4.1. Conclusion**

As a result of this research, it was determined that there was a positive and significant relationship between the integrative self-knowledge and mindfulness of the counselor candidates and that the curiosity sub-dimension of mindfulness was a positive predictor of integrative self-knowledge. When these results are interpreted considering the role of psychological counselors in social skills training, it can be interpreted that while psychological counselors provide their clients with awareness-based skills, high self-knowledge will increase the efficiency of the process.

The results of this current study, which emphasizes the importance of mindfulness in counselor education, show that there are relationships between counselors' mindfulness and self-awareness and that these variables differ according to gender and grade level. Mindfulness-based activities and programs can be emphasized more in the training of counselors. In line with the research findings that multicultural counseling positively affects client awareness and counseling self-efficacy and the findings obtained in the current study, the positive effect of mindfulness on the counseling process should be emphasized in the training process of counselors.

## **4.2. Recommendations**

In line with the findings obtained as a result of the research, the following recommendations can be made:

In addition to the lessons that support the acquisition of self-knowledge, which is essential for the therapeutic relationship and emphasized in the lessons, lesson contents that support the counselor to brace himself not to be affected by this awareness can be added. By teaching mindfulness-based therapies as an elective course, students' awareness of self-knowledge and mindfulness can be raised, and awareness can be raised about how to acquire and develop this skill and teach their clients. In addition, self-knowledge and mindfulness levels can be increased by determining the current level of mindfulness of counselor candidates and by enabling them to design group psychoeducation programs through counseling skills courses or develop this skill through programs based on mindfulness.

## **4.3. Limitations**

The results of the current study, which emphasizes the importance of mindfulness in counselor education, should be evaluated in light of some limitations:

In this study, data were collected online through self-report scales. In future studies, the types of awareness can be investigated more comprehensively using different scales. The cross-sectional study does not provide information about the developmental course of mindfulness in counselor candidates in different years. In this context, future studies can be designed longitudinally. The present research was conducted with psychological counselor candidates continuing their education at a university in the Eastern Anatolia Region. Further research can be conducted with more extensive and diverse sample groups.

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