

University Students' Perceptions about Psychological Help Seeking: A Qualitative Study¹

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate university students' perception about psychological help seeking. In this context, the data was obtained from the 644 students, namely 216 male and 424 female in 2016. Students were asked to complete a survey including a demographic questionnaire and open-ended questions concerning thought and feelings about seeking psychological help. Gathered data was analyzed by using the inductive method via NVivo programme. Results of the study showed that the students' opinions for seeking psychological help are gathered under seven main themes that include economic factors, perception errors, counselors' competency, self-disclosure, experience of previous seeking help, alternative coping strategies and expected benefit from counseling. Students stated they have negative help seeking attitudes due to the fact that they think counseling centers are expensive, there are no competent counselors and they do not believe counseling is helpful for their problems. In addition, findings indicated that students have misinformation about how to help them in counseling centers.

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Introduction

Emerging adulthood that coincides with the university education is a unique transition period in which while students continue to pursue identity and independence on the one hand; on the other hand they are struggling with the problems brought about by university (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, and Ciarrochi, 2005). University students may encounter a number of problems and be forced to deal with such problems. In Turkey, university students experience adjustment, academic, relationship, future anxiety, family, communication etc. (Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya and Terzi, 2012; Topkaya and Meydan, 2013). Experiences such as having come from a different city, meeting new people and going away from home for

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the first time (Sabone, 2009) may make it all the more difficult for the students. The students that cannot cope with such difficulties and fail to successfully adapt to university life may face psychological problems (Daugherty and Lane 1999; Halamandaris and Power 1999). A study of 1,616 Turkish university students revealed terrible truth: 27.1% of students have moderate depression, 47.1% were overwhelmed with anxiety, and 27.1% suffer from stress (Bayran and Bilgel, 2008). At a Canadian university, 88.8% of the students identified feeling generally overwhelmed, 50.2% stated that they had anxiety, 66.1% of them were very sad, and 34.2% reported feeling depressed (Craggs, 2012). In addition, psychological disturbances constitute almost half of the illness burden of young adults (WHO, 2008). A study conducted on students suggests that nearly all students go through a stressful period in their last year at university and that 12.4% of them have had depression that affected their academic performance (ACHA, 2014). Moreover, it has been established that 75% of those who left school during the first two years did so because of adaptation problems (Boulter, 2002). Students with psychological problems have poorer relationships with other students, less participant in activities, lower grade averages, and lower rates of graduation (Byrd and McKinney, 2012). In short, these findings suggest that university students are incapable of dealing with their problems on their own and that they are under the risk of having mental problems and thus seriously need professional help (NIMH, 2008).

Use of adequate and appropriate strategies in dealing with problems plays a significant role in developing a healthy personality (Steiner, Erickson, Hernandez & Pavelski, 2002). Thus, it is very important for individuals to seek help when they are unable to deal with their problems on their own. Koydemir, Erel, Yumurtacı and Şahin (2010) identified that university students would not receive help from a professional unless the problem seemed too important, and that friends were the primary source of referral for psychological help. Similarly young people receive more help from non-professional help sources such as family and friends (Boldero and Fallon, 1995) and dating friends, lecturer (Topkaya and Meydan, 2013). Professional psychological sources of help; counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists or social workers who offer mental health services are considered. Non-professional sources of help; such as family members, parents, partner, friend or academic advisor are expressed (Farrelly, 2008). Professional psychological help includes therapeutic interviews with professionals to help individuals improve their level of well-being or change positively (British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy - BACP, 2013) University students can receive professional psychological help from the universities' psychological counseling services. According to International Association of Psychological Counseling Services (2005) counseling services should provide counseling assistance for students with problems; conduct preventive studies to support students' learning skills; and support healthy development through out-of-school activities and consultation services. However, there are a lot of studies revealed that students may still shy away from applying to such psychological counseling services even if they fail to deal with their problems on their own (Serim and Cihangir-Çankaya, 2015; Topkaya, Vogel and Brenner, 2017). In this respect, it is important to identify the factors that prevent students from seeking psychological help.

The literature has many studies conducted with the aim of identifying the factors that affect the individuals' attitudes towards seeking psychological help. The studies investigating the factors that influence students' attitudes towards seeking help seem to have mostly dealt with such variables as the self stigma, public stigma, self-efficacy, social support, self disclosure anxiety, expectation of support, self respect, gender roles, attachment styles and help seeking attitudes (Gürsoy, 2014; Irkörüçü, 2012; Türküm, 1999, Topkaya, 2011; Vogel et al., 2017). Since these studies are limited to certain variables, they are far from presenting a holistic perspective about psychological help seeking. In this context, it is expected that current study will provide more comprehensive data about what people think about getting help and psychological counseling services. In addition, we can learn different factors prevent individuals from seeking professional psychological help or encourage them to seek help. This study aims to reveal what students think about

professional counseling services and professional psychological help seeking. In this context, the answers to the following questions have been searched:

- Which factors prevent students seeking professional psychological help?
- Which factors encourage students to seek professional psychological help?

In this way, it is expected to solve the problems experienced by the university students and establish a better understanding of the critical factors that have a bearing on students' decision on seeking help from professional psychological counseling services (Komiya, Good & Sherrod, 2000).

Moreover, it is also believed that this study will give mental health professionals the opportunity to reach out to those who shy away from or avoid seeking help and raise the awareness of public regarding counseling services and mitigate their concerns regarding such services. On the other hand, this study is also expected to make contributions in terms of appreciating the importance of being a culturally sensitive psychological counselor and, as such, realizing the necessity to correct any tendency/judgment that is likely to inhibit a therapeutic relationship. In this respect, this study may help support services providers -who are aware of the factors influencing the psychological help seeking behaviors- to organize more effective training programs in an effort to garner interest from the unwilling and reluctant groups that are skeptical about seeking help.

As a conclusion, the findings of this study are anticipated to make significant contributions in terms of organizing the psychological counseling centers housed within the universities, establishing the contents of the programs to be arranged and increasing their efficiency. Moreover, such findings will also be taken into consideration in reaching out to the students who shy away from seeking help. This may help encourage students to apply to the support services to cope with their problems in a more functional manner and make it easier for them to benefit from such services effectively. Turning psychological counseling centers into places where students can benefit from the offered services without having a negative attitude towards them will be a significant source of support in terms of making them feel secure and improving their emotional wellbeing, happiness and academic success.

Method

The meaning of seeking psychological help is presented in this study based on the associations that are attributed and not attributed to the said phenomenon (Meriam, 2013). We used qualitative research design (Moustakas, 1994) to explore and interpret the perceptions of students' about seeking psychological help.

Study Group

The study group consists of 644 students studying in 14 different undergraduate departments of the university during the 2015-2016 academic years. Detail demographic information of sample is presented at Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of sample

	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	424	66.25
	Male	216	33.75
Previous help seeking behavior	Did	159	33.19
	Did not	479	66.81
Residence	City	398	62.28

Grade	County	174	27.23
	Small town	38	5.94
	Village	29	4.53
Grade	Freshmen	154	24.10
	Sophomore	168	26.29
	Junior	200	31.29
	Senior	117	18.30
Department	Faculty of education	165	25.82
	Faculty of literature	45	7.04
	Faculty of pharmacy	31	4.85
	Faculty of science	46	7.19
	Faculty of fine arts	20	3.13
	Faculty of aeronautics and astronautics	33	5.16
	Faculty of law	43	6.72
	Faculty of economics and administrative sciences	58	9.07
	Faculty of communication	37	5.79
	Faculty of architecture	10	1.56
	Faculty of engineering	75	11.73
	Faculty of health sciences	21	3.28
	Faculty of sport sciences	27	4.22
	Faculty of tourism	28	4.38
	Total		644

*Some students did not state their some dempgrafic info.

Participants consist of 216 male and 424 female students. Most of them reside at city and county. the grade-level distributions of student are very close to each other. Of students, 159 stated they had sought formal psychological help, but 479 ones had not sought any formal help. Attention has been given to students from all faculties of the university. It can be said that the sample is sufficiently varied and consists of individuals with different demographic characteristics.

Procedure

The qualitative research design was selected for this study because it explores peoples' experiences concerning a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). While the data collection tool was being developed, it was observed that metaphors and open-ended questions commonly were used as a tool in revealing the perceptions of individuals. Thus, to determine students' perceptions of seeking psychological help, sentence completion, open ended questions and metaphors were used. An example of how to create metaphors for the students was presented in the form. Data was gathered from the participants through self-report form with demographic questions and following* open ended questions about professional psychological help seeking.

*My attitude towards seeking psychological help is positive/negative because,.....

*What do you think about seeking psychological help?

*Psychological help is like a, because it (metaphor)

Two different sampling methods have been used in choosing the study sample. First, by using an availability sampling method, the university departments have been visited and the data collected from voluntary students during lectures as per the permissions granted. By using a purposive sampling method, the psychological counseling service within the campus has been visited and the data collected from voluntary

individuals who applied to the service for help. Students were stated their anonymity would be preserved. In this study, 644 participants were arrived in order to reach the saturation point and diversification of sample. Ethical approval was obtained from the University Ethic Committee.

The main researchers of the study are a professor and a research assistant at psychological counseling and guidance department of university. They have had years of experiences at these domains. Prior to data collection, researchers noted questions and asked two professionals to examine themes.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained was analyzed by using the inductive method (Creswell, 2012). The NVivo 9.2 software package was used for performing the analyses. After the data were collected, the forms were classified and subjected to descriptive and content analysis. In descriptive analysis, there is often direct citation to reflect the views and experiences of the observed or interviewed individuals in a striking way. The basic process in content analysis is to combine similar data with specific concepts and themes and interpret them in an understandable way (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2013).

In the analysis of the data the following process was followed (Creswell, 2014; Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2013) : (1) In content analysis, the context unit (words, sentences, paragraphs, opinions, or the entire text) is decided. In this study, the expressions/ sentences related to the categories were selected as the context unit. The data which were not useable were also ignored and the data were subjected to a sorting. The codes obtained and the expressions/ sentences related to these codes are given to two field specialists, who are asked to independently evaluate how appropriate the codes are. In line with their suggestions, researchers have made necessary corrections within the consensus. (2) At this stage, each coding was analyzed for similarity or commonality with other codes by using content analysis techniques. Sub-categories were created by putting together related codes. Literature has been considered in the creation of the themes and the themes have been named by considering the concepts in the literature. (3) To write the latest state of the findings, the data is reduced to a small, manageable set of themes. After the main themes were formed, an area specialist was asked to examine the whole structure including codes, sub-themes and main themes. It has been examined whether there is a meaningful, understandable, and logical connection between codes and themes. Little changes have been made in naming this stage. The final version of the structure related to the findings was given and the interpretation of result was begun.

Trustworthiness of Results

In order to ensure the persuasiveness (internal validity) of the study, the data was diversified by including participants from different genders, different faculties, different grade levels, different settlements.. In addition, the experts with firm knowledge of qualitative research methods that had previously worked on the subject were asked for their opinion. A purposeful sampling was realized in order to ensure the transferability (external validity) of the study. In this respect, it is stated that the sampling should reflect both the general population and the private one (Creswell, 2015). The participants were diversified by having picked both from those who had received psychological help in the past and those who had not. A consistency and confirmation review is recommended for ensuring the consistency (reliability) of a study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993). To this end, it is recommended that a special attention is paid to the similarities within the process in which the data collected the conceptualization during the coding process and the consistency of the judgment with that of the raw data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The fact that the present study meets the aforementioned conditions has been confirmed by an expert opinion.

Results

In this study, the data obtained from the 644 participants who answered the research question 'What are the thoughts of university students on seeking psychological help?' have been analyzed by using the inductive method. At the end of the analysis, university students' thoughts on seeking psychological help have been categorized under seven main themes: economic factors, perceptual errors, self-disclosure, previous help seeking experience, competence of the counselors, alternative solution methods and expected benefit from psychological counseling services. Findings regarding each theme and the sub themes thereof are presented at Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the analysis: dimensions and categories

	Themes	Sub-themes
Perception about psychological help seeking	Economic factors	Expensive fee of counseling services
		Cannot afford
	Perception errors	Related to counselee
		Related to counseling services
	Counselor's competency	Competent counselors
		Incompetent counselors
	Self disclosure	Keeping to self
		Having a brief chat
	Experience of previous help seeking	Negative experience
		Positive experience
	Alternative coping strategies	Coping by themselves
		Seeking help from non-professionals
	Expected benefit from counseling	Essential needs
		Supportive
Relieving		
Troubleshooter		
Ineffective		

Economic factors: It is observed that the students expressing negative views on psychological counseling base their opinion on economic reasons. The students who share this view believe that the psychological counseling services are expensive and only the rich can benefit from the services provided by such centers. Moreover, there are also some students who say that they cannot go to the psychological counseling center due to lack of funds.

A-330: 'It is not affordable for everybody, only the high income individuals can benefit from such services.'

Perceptual errors: Another theme that influences students' attitudes towards seeking psychological help is identified as perceptual errors. The main theme of perceptual errors consists of two sub themes, namely perceptions of individuals receiving counseling services and perceptions of support services. It is seen that students view those who apply to the psychological support services as troubled persons and label them as such.

A-604: 'I'm of the opinion that only those who lack self-esteem seek psychological help.'

A-85: 'I'm not a psychopath.'

As for the support services, they believe that the only solution offered by psychological counseling is listening to one's problems. It has been found they confused psychological counseling with psychiatric

services and their negative attitude was underpinned by the fact that psychiatric services involved drug treatment.

A-1129: 'I don't think talking solves problems that much.'

A-1127: 'They make you take drugs like an addict, I wasn't able to quit medication for six years, and I've just recently quit medication; I've solved the problem in my head.'

Self-disclosure: Another theme that states facts regarding the attitudes towards seeking help is identified as opening oneself up. This theme is further divided into two sub themes, namely the ability to talk about one's problems to others and inability to talk about one's problems to others. In the sub theme 'inability to talk about one's problems to others', the students have stated that the problems they had were personal and they found it hard to share them with others. Moreover one can also come across the views of some students that actually wished to see a psychological counselor but lacked the courage to do so.

A-306: 'Not everybody can talk about their problems all the time.'

A-507: 'I can't go there, I can't help it, I just cannot bring myself to go there, I tried but I couldn't.'

In the sub theme 'ability to talk about one's problems to others', the students state that they need familiar persons -though not necessarily from their immediate social network- with whom they can share some of their problems. The students that believe that problems can only be solved by talking state that they see psychological counseling centers as places where they can talk about everything about themselves.

A-802: 'One comes to a dead end sometimes; it is a lot easier to talk to a counselor about the issues that you don't want your friends and family to hear about.'

A-631: 'You can't find solutions to problems unless you share them and talk about them.'

A-340: 'The only person you can tell everything openly.'

Help seeking experience: Another theme that is found to be a significant factor in terms of students' attitudes towards seeking help is identified as previous help seeking experience. The theme 'previous help seeking experience' is further divided into two sub themes, namely the positive experience and negative experience. According to the views expressed in the positive experience sub theme, students who have previously received psychological support say that they found it useful. It is also observed that some students knew of people who received psychological help and benefited from it and thus developed a positive attitude through indirect learning.

A-1294: 'I managed to get through, if not totally got over, the hardest times of my life thanks to psychological help.'

A-408: 'I know people who receive psychological help and feel good as a result.'

The views in the negative experience sub theme suggest that some students have personally gone to the psychological support services but couldn't find what they were looking for or knew of people who sought help from such services to no avail.

A-1290: 'No good came from the psychologist I went to seek help.'

A-629: 'A person who committed suicide had also sought help from them.'

Competence of counselor: Another main theme created for the students' attitudes towards seeking psychological help is identified as the competence of the counselors that work in the psychological counseling services. The theme 'competence of the counselor' is further divided into two sub themes, namely the positive belief and negative belief. The students that have positive views about the competence of counselors see them

as experts and believe that they should be trusted and that an expert view will be useful in solving one's problems.

A-379: 'I fail to be impartial when viewing my problems, sometimes I think it would be good to have some professional help.'

A-891: 'Receiving help from an expert when needed is the best course of action.'

The students who have negative views on the competence of counselors think that they are not that competent enough to solve their problems and that they are only in it for the money. Moreover, they do not appear to believe in the science of psychology.

A-834: 'A psychologist or a psychiatrist or a counselor coming from this kind of poor education system would not be able to help a person coming from the same poor education system.'

A-102: 'Those who offer psychological help are doing it for the money; they are not sincere about their efforts.'

Alternative coping strategies: The students say that their attitudes towards seeking help are influenced by other alternative methods that are available in addition to the psychological counseling services. The data regarding this view falls under the main theme of alternative solution methods. The alternative coping methods theme is further divided into two sub themes, namely 'solving problems through individual efforts' and 'asking help from others'. The views in the sub theme 'solving problems through individual efforts' suggest that students try to solve their problems on their own rather than asking help from other people. They even believe that problems can only be solved and have to be solved by the people themselves. They say that problems can be solved more effectively this way.

A-615: 'Everybody is their own psychologist and capable of overcoming every problem in time.'

A-678: 'I don't believe that there is any difficulty that a person cannot overcome by themselves.'

A-169: 'People can sort out their problems more quickly and successfully on their own.'

According to the views expressed in the sub theme 'asking help from others', students believe that there are solutions other than psychological counseling services. Stating that they would ask help from their families or close friends, the students think that asking help in this manner is more useful than going to psychological counseling services for solving their problems.

A-279: 'I think that I'd get relief by talking to my family and close friends first.'

A-620: 'A person can sort out their problems on their own and with the help of their friends.'

A-355: 'Talking to the loved ones makes one feel better.'

Expected benefit from counseling: Lastly, the students' views on their attitudes towards seeking psychological help are gathered under the main theme of 'trust in the usefulness of the psychological counseling services'. The main theme of trust in usefulness is further divided into the following sub themes: useful, supportive, problem solving, comforting and useless. According to the views fell under the sub theme 'useful', the students think that psychological help is a basic need for everybody. Moreover, they believe that a different perspective can be obtained through psychological help:

A-912: 'A person must seek psychological help in only certain situations.'

A-60: 'One cannot survive without getting help in this world.'

A-464: 'A professional, observing from outside, can identify and interpret the issues that a person fails to see in their life.'

The students who think that seeking psychological help is supportive believe that it is necessary so that people get to know themselves and organize their lives and do not feel left alone in this world. Moreover, they appear to believe that seeking help provides hope and guidance in one's life.

A-1187: 'One should feel that they are not completely alone.'

A-1010: 'It helps a lot in terms of leading our lives in a healthy manner.'

A-1025: 'The professional expert opinion has a guiding effect.'

The students who think that seeking help solves problems believe that seeking help is a healthy behavior and a facilitator for solving problems. They even believe that problems cannot be solved without getting psychological help, which they think is the best solution for the most difficult situations.

A-1102: 'Problems grow bigger and bigger when I don't get any help, they get to a point where nothing can be done and it is too late for doing anything.'

A-1293: 'I think seeking help is the best solution for difficult situations.'

A-996: 'I don't think one can get right of their problems without getting psychological support.'

The students who think that seeking help has a comforting effect believe that they can get relief through the effective listening technique that is used in psychological counseling sessions.

A-871: 'Sometimes a person may have issues that they want to talk about with someone for hours on end; they won't get any relief if they don't get it off their chest.'

Lastly, the students who think that psychological counselors are useless are found to be of the opinion that seeking psychological help is unnecessary. They also believe that seeking psychological help will not do them any good in solving their problems and that it is a waste of time.

A-1033: 'Seeking psychological help is unnecessary and tiresome.'

A-460: 'People coming to the psychological counseling centers have hundreds of different problems, the person called expert cannot have been specialized in all of them.'

Discussion and Conclusion

When the students' views on seeking psychological help are examined, it is found that economic factors, perception errors, counselors competency, self-disclosure, experience of previous help seeking, alternative coping strategies and expected benefit from psychological counseling are influential in determining students' attitudes towards seeking psychological help.

According to the views expressed under the economic factors theme, students find psychological counseling centers as expensive and thus feel unable to afford to apply to a counseling service. This bears similarities with the findings of some studies. A study conducted with 5000 male participants from various ethnic backgrounds has found that those who received psychological help were wealthier than others (Parent, Hammer, Bradstreet, Schwartz and Jobe, 2016). In a similar vein, there are studies that present a positive correlation between the level of income and psychological help seeking attitude (Hammer, Vogel and Heimerdinger-Edwards, 2013). Research in Turkey revealed that, people with low income cannot seek psychological help for obsessive treatment (Beşiroğlu & Ağargün, 2006); that the earthquake victims with better economic status applied to more psychological help (Kılıç, 2008) and that public employees with good economic status have a significantly more positive attitude of seeking psychological help (Arslantaş, Dereboy, Aştı & Pektekin, 2011). The fact that students expressed negative views on seeking psychological help on account of economic reasons suggests that they somehow harbor prejudices against seeking psychological help. This is because the counseling centers housed within universities do not charge students any fee for such

services. This also proves that the students are unaware of the existence of psychological counseling centers within the universities or of the fact that they provide services free of charge. However, despite the fact that the said counseling centers within the universities provide services free of charge, an ordinary person in the street cannot benefit from such services free of charge. In this respect, one should not lose sight of the fact that the prices charged in private facilities play a negative role in determining the attitudes and decisions of the individuals on seeking psychological help.

According to the views expressed in the perceptual errors theme, the students have the tendency to label those seeking professional psychological help as psychopaths. Such findings suggest that the students have the anxiety of social stigma. The literature appears to yield similar results in this respect. A study on teachers' psychological help seeking attitude has found that despite the fact that the teachers had a high level of depression and were aware of it themselves, they had a negative attitude towards seeking help due to their anxiety of social stigma (Bullard and Hosoda, 2015). In a similar vein, the study conducted by Topkaya (2011) has found that social stigma is a significant negative predictor of the attitudes and intentions towards seeking psychological help. Moreover, the participants also appear to think that the psychological support only appeals to troubled people and to those who are powerless to cope with their problems. Along these lines, university students have pointed out that the most important element that blocks the seeking psychological help is the fear of stigma and being taunted by others (Kızıldağ, Demirtaş-Zorbaz, Gençtanırım & Arıcı, 2012). At another study, an announcement was made about the psychological help service that would be offered free of charge and requests were collected from the university students. Only 32% of the participants stated that they would like to benefit from this service. But it was determined that a significant part of them gave false contact information or rejected help offer. Almost 20% of the participants agreed to receive help (Zeren, Erus & Amanvermez, 2017). That points out the fact that people get anxious about stigma and ostracisation by the society and lose face in public when they are known to have professional psychological help. Therefore one may deduce that they will try to conceal their problems or opt for other methods rather than going to the support services. As a conclusion they will likely to possess negative attitudes and behaviors towards seeking help.

The views in the perceptual errors sub theme suggest that students have erroneous beliefs with respect to the counseling services providing psychological help. In this respect, the students appear to believe that the psychological counseling services only offer talking and listening as a means to solving one's problems. This shows that students tend to act on their prejudices without being aware of the techniques employed in the support services. This also shows that they are oblivious of the great importance of effective listening and talking methods in solving problems. In addition, they have the impression that psychological counseling services prescribe medication treatment that leads to addiction. This shows that the students are not aware of the distinction between the psychological counseling services and psychiatric services. In the light of the aforementioned views, it is observed that the students have erroneous information as to therapy methods of counseling services and have the anxiety of stigmatization regarding the people that seek help and develop negative views and attitudes towards seeking help based on such erroneous information they have about counseling services.

Students appear to have both positive and negative views on the competence of the counselors in seeking psychological help. The positive views suggest that they see the clinicians working in counseling services as experts and believe that they are to be trusted in their work. Moreover, they think that they will get a different insight thanks to the counselors and be able to sort out their problems much easier with their help. Therefore, it can be argued that the students who believe that the counseling services employees are competent have a positive attitude towards seeking psychological help. Those who had previously received psychological help did not consider seeking help again in the future because they did not find their counselors

sufficiently empathic, experienced and considered them inadequate to developing a strong therapeutic alliance (Watsford & Rickwood, 2014).

Those who have negative views on the competence of the counselors believe that the science of psychology is incapable of solving problems in the first place. Therefore they believe that the psychological counselors who have studied the science of psychology are incapable of solving problems as well. Moreover they are of the opinion that the counseling services employees are not enthusiastic and sincere about helping others as they do their job only for money. A study conducted for identifying the persons who refused getting help on the grounds that counseling services employees were not empathetical enough to understand them also shows similar results (Avent, Cashwell and Brown-Jeffy, 2015).

It is an undeniable fact that a considerable number of counseling services employees are coming from various other professional backgrounds and can be incompetent to help persons with psychological problems. This may be the case because of lack of professional supervision and standards that apply to the persons employed in this particular profession. When examined in studies on Turkey, it is seen that the standards such as how the supervision for psychological counseling applications, how many weeks and hours will be given, and which supervision interventions and techniques will be used are not clear (Meydan, 2014). In addition, as a matter of fact, it seems difficult for them to offer effective counseling services either because of workers graduated from outside the field or because graduates are not adequately trained (Doğan, 2013). People seeking psychological help from services may ask for help from incompetent persons because they are unable to distinguish a competent counselor from an incompetent one. Once disappointed, they tend to question the competence of other employees as well. Therefore such people may have lost their faith in counseling services thinking that it was pointless to ask help from incompetent people employed in such facilities. It can be argued that such a view, acquired through direct or indirect learning, will have a negative influence in determining the students' attitudes towards seeking help.

The views in the self-disclosure sub theme suggest that the students have both positive and negative opinions about this matter. It is observed that the students that have difficulty talking about their problems usually avoid talking about their problems with others and choose to conceal them. This points out that, in addition to having the anxiety of self-disclosure, the participants may also find it hard to trust in counseling centers with the issues of confidentiality. The literature suggests that self concealment is associated with skeptical, anxious and introverted personality traits (Kahn and Hessling, 2001). Many people may have uncomfortable feelings and thoughts to tell others about themselves. When the level of distress increases, even the need to share also goes up; they hide their concerns with the anxiety they will be abused, that they will not be accepted (Hartley, 1999). It appears that people with a high tendency to hide themselves at this point must have a more negative attitude towards seeking psychological help, which means that they must express the content related to their emotions (Serim, Cihangir-Çankaya, 2015).

Moreover, there appear to be some students who are aware of the fact that they need psychological help but lack the courage to take the first step in that direction. This shows that the self efficacy perceptions of the students are low. The literature suggests that the people with low self efficacy (Bicil, 2012) and negative self perception (Vogel, Wester and Larson, 2007) have a negative attitude towards seeking help. Avoidance of seeking help leads to a vicious cycle for the people with low self efficacy and self respect. The counseling services employees are compelled to make an extra effort for reaching out to such individuals and employ different methods in doing so.

The students who believe that problems can only be solved by sharing them see the psychological counseling services as places where they can talk about everything in their personal lives. They also view the counseling services as an important opportunity for talking about the problems that they otherwise would not

be able to talk with their friends and family. This suggests that the psychological help is a more significant source of support than social support.

It is found that the previous help seeking experience is also a significant factor that determines the students' attitudes towards seeking help. In this respect, there appears to be students who have had both positive and negative experiences in the past. Those who report positive views seem to have had a positive experience themselves or known a close friend or relative that benefited from psychological help. On the other hand, there are those who have failed to get the expected benefits from psychological help or known people in a similar situation. The fact that such experiences have a bearing on the students' attitudes towards seeking help draws parallels to the findings of various other studies. There are a lot of studies showing previous help seeking experience as an important factor on help seeking attitudes. Those who have already received psychological help seem to have a more positive psychological help seeking attitudes than those who have not (Atik and Yalçın, 2011; Fleishman, 2009; Kumcağız, 2013). A study conducted by Vogel, Wester, & Larson (2007) has found that 75% of the university students applied to the counseling services, on account of the recommendations of those previously benefited from such services. Therefore it has been established that each person applied to the counseling services can indirectly influence the attitudes of many people around them towards seeking help. On the strength of this finding, it can be argued that the counseling services employees should act responsibly to leave a positive impression on those who come to the facilities for counseling. This way, the psychological help seeking behavior will be normalized through the positive feedback of satisfied individuals and people will be encouraged to adopt a positive attitude.

The views in the alternative coping strategies suggest that the students opt for various different methods for solving their problems instead of applying to the counseling services. In this respect, it is observed that the students try to solve their problems by themselves first, and they seem to think that this is the best course of action. They appear to be of the opinion that everybody should sort out their problems by themselves and thus they reject getting help, thinking that other alternative methods will not do them any good.

Those who seek help from others state that they do not consider seeking psychological help to be in this particular category. Instead, they appear to turn to their family and close relatives and then their friends for help. In a similar vein, the study conducted by Allen et al. (2016) has found that the participants tried to solve their problems on their own by using various methods including taking shelter in religion and espousing the situation rather than applying to the psychological counseling services. After that they sought support from their families (Allen, Kim, Smith and Hafoka, 2016). Although the priests recognized resources of social support and professional counseling services, they generally underused them. Religious coping strategy they used mostly was perceived as an efficient strategy to maintain emotional balance. They only sought professional help with reluctance and as a last resort (Pietkiewicz & Bachryj, 2016). According to the present study, the students believe such methods to be more beneficial than the support provided by the counseling services. In the light of the aforementioned, one concludes that the students do not have sufficient information about the counseling services and are not adequately familiar with such institutions.

As for the expected benefit from psychological counseling services theme, the students have both positive and negative views in this particular category. Their belief in the supportive, problem solving and comforting aspects of psychological help appear to be significant in this respect. They believe that getting psychological help will make it easier for them to solve their problems, and it will help them preserve their mental health and put their lives back on track; they even think that talking will help. Therefore, the students are aware of the fact that getting psychological help will make a positive contribution for them in many respects. The literature also suggests that the persons who expect to benefit from counseling services have a positive attitude towards seeking psychological help (Topkaya, 2011; Vogel vd., 2008). In addition, individuals

with positive expectancy are more likely to seek help and to conduct more efficient therapy sessions (Dew & Bickman, 2005; Glass, Arnkoff, & Shapiro, 2001).

The negative views expressed by the students suggest that getting psychological help will not do them any good, which will only be a waste of money and time. Such a negative view can be thought to have been formed through prejudices as well as the past experiences. However, none of the views within that theme suggests that they have actually witnessed a negative situation. There are a lot of people who applying counseling service through the advice of others without preoccupying about the effectiveness of the psychological counselor (Watsford, Rickwood, & Vanags, 2012). These studies suggest that individuals may not always have realistic expectations or any anticipation of receiving help. In this context, individuals may be informed about the functioning of the counseling and its possible benefits. So that applications for counseling services can be facilitated and the effectiveness of the counseling can be increased.

As a conclusion, psychological counseling is mostly beneficial for individuals, though it is not guaranteed that it will work for everybody every time. The counseling services employees should provide more information regarding this positive fact and encourage people to adopt a positive attitude by eliminating their negative views on the usefulness of seeking professional psychological help. As well as other health services, psychological counseling services should also be offered free of charge to the public. In this way the psychological counseling may be functional in protecting and treating mental health of community. that the psychological counseling service is a health care service and that it is the usual situation to get help in this regard should be adopted by community. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that those who provide psychological counseling are experts trained in their field, so that pre-experience will make it easier for individuals to re-apply for help if they need it. They will also encourage other people in need to seek help.

To verify themes students refer to help seeking attitudes, self-report scales can be used at new researches. Students complain expensive fees of counseling centers, so they state they cannot afford to apply to counseling services. In this context, especially counseling services at university campus can be free of charge. In addition to this, students claim professionals at counseling services are not enough competent to help. In this regard, it can be effective to control the competence of professional in terms of stabile standards.

The researchers are aware that there are some limitations to research, despite all their efforts. One of the possible limitations is the sampling method. Almost all kinds of participants took part with accessible sampling. The fact that the in-depth data cannot be collected due to the number of questions is a limitation. Finally, even though themes have been created with the common opinion of different experts, it is possible that personal bias may be involved in analysis and interpretation.

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