



Loneliness and Resilience of Teacher Candidates: The Mediator role of Cynicism

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate a mediator role of cynicism in the relationship between loneliness and resilience. Participants were 302 teacher candidates [177 (58.6%) female, 125 (41.4%) male, Mage = 23.14 years, SD = 2.38] who completed questionnaires package the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Resilience Scale and the Hunter Cynicism Scale. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. A bootstrapping analysis was conducted in order to determine any indirect effects. The results showed that loneliness predicted cynicism positively and resilience negatively, and that cynicism predicted resilience negatively. It was further found that the structural equation model that proposed that loneliness had a direct and an indirect effect through cynicism on resilience was confirmed. The results of the study were discussed in the light of relevant literature, and suggestions for future studies were made.

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Keywords:

loneliness, resilience, cynicism, teacher candidates

Introduction

Resilience is an important notion that positive psychology is interested in. Resilience derives from the Latin word 'resilient', which means that a substance is elastic and it can easily spring back to its original shape (Greene, 2002). Resilience is defined as the adaptation and coping skills exhibited by an individual when faced with stress-inducing situations. As the value that the individual attaches himself/herself increases, it becomes easier for him/her to solve developmental crises, adapt after traumatic experiences, and cope with difficult life conditions (Kararmak & Çetinkaya, 2011).

Resilience is the positive adaptation that helps individuals to cope when they have experiences that shatter their typical course of life (Masten et al., 2009). The basic idea underlying resilience is that individuals

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see themselves as adequate in various aspects of life. In other words, it's individuals' perceptions of self-sufficiency (Özcan, 2005). According to Rutter (1999), resilience is a term used to describe the resistance emerging in case of psychosocial risk experiences. The emergence of resilience requires the individual to activate the protective factors in the event of some risk situations brought about by traumatic experiences such as the loss of the loved one, divorce, illness, poverty, natural disasters (Güloğlu & Kararımak, 2010). Gizir (2007) classified protective factors as individual, familial, and environmental factors and pointed to high self-esteem and resilience as one of the individual protective factors. As one of the notions that positive psychology is interested in, resilience is also associated with negative concepts. One of these concepts is loneliness.

Generally, when individuals have inadequate and individually unsatisfactory social relationships and lives, their lives are affected to the same extent and this leads individuals to isolate themselves from society and feel alone. Loneliness is a notion that is frequently studied in areas such as medicine, management, education, and psychology. Also defined as the discrepancy between the levels of social relationships that the individual desires and has reached (Perlman & Peplau, 1981), loneliness is a psychological condition that makes a person unhappy and uncomfortable. Loneliness is an emotional state that makes one feel alienated and is considered an intangible state of weakness (Kaymaz, Eroğlu & Sayılar, 2014; Özçelik & Barsade, 2011). Loneliness also comprises experiencing problems in social relationships or establishing inadequate social relationships, deficiency in decision making, and focusing on the weaknesses of his/her own and others (Copel, 1988). In his study, Brellim (1985) attributed the sources of loneliness to inadequacies in our relationships. In addition, he explained the reasons for the inadequacies experienced by individuals in relationships as alienation, having no attachment to someone, being alone, compulsory or unwilling abstraction, and displacement.

In studies carried out in areas such as education, medicine, and psychology, loneliness is generally addressed with two dimensions as emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Emotional loneliness is a subjective assessment of the individual's inability to make a sincere and trustworthy friend. Social loneliness, on the other hand, is the situation where the person has less social relationships than he or she thinks and wishes, and where the person has relationships with few friends and colleagues. As a result of social loneliness, the individual can be observed to have shyness, marginal behaviors, and thoughts that s/he would be rejected by his/her friends (Eraslan-Çapan & Sarıçalı, 2016; Şişman & Turan, 2004).

Prospective teachers will want to work in the school (public or private), which is an organization after they graduate. Therefore, it is possible to address loneliness as an issue whose evaluation is considered to be appropriate in the organizational field. The factors triggering organizational loneliness can lead to undesirable consequences for the organization and the individual (Uçkun & Üzüm, 2019). Organizational loneliness refers to the state of an individual's loneliness due to the social environment rather than the individual's feeling himself/herself emotionally alone (Cindiloğlu et al., 2017). Loneliness within the organizational environment arises out of the individual's wishes or as a result of social isolation (Yaşar, 2007). It is observed that individuals left alone within the organization submit to the demands of the authority. Therefore, when the relationship between psychological resilience and loneliness is discussed, determining the variables mediating between the two shows up as a necessity. The mediator variable discussed in this study is cynicism.

Cynicism is a notion that has been discussed and studied in a wide range of fields. An individual who believes that people are only motivated by self-interest and accordingly accepts everyone as self-seeker is defined as "cynic", and the thought trying to explain this is identified as "cynicism" (Erdost, Karacaoğlu & Reyhanoğlu, 2007). The general judgment about cynicism is that the principles of honesty, justice, and sincerity are sacrificed to personal interests (James, 2005). Research has shown that cynical individuals despise the institutions they work at (Kalağan & Güzeller, 2010). Cynicism causes individuals to feel emotional insensitivity, inconsideration, or indifference as a result of long working hours, workload, ineffective

leadership and management, and new tasks in the workplace (Abraham, 2000; Kalağan, 2009; Wanous et al., 2000). In other words, cynicism is expressed as a general or special attitude that covers mistrust for social communities, groups, institutions, ideologies or individuals, and disdain, despair and disappointment towards them (Andersson, 1996).

In general, cynicism can cause individuals to fall in loneliness as a result of despair and disappointment they experience by exhibiting either submission to authority or by being silent in the face of injustice. University students who are prospective teachers experience difficulties arising from the life conditions in their life cycle and finding employment after graduation in Turkey. The prospective teachers can push themselves into loneliness thinking that they will not be able to find employment as a result of the fact that it is almost impossible to be appointed to public schools and that private schools seek for various references. Assuming that prospective teachers who push themselves into loneliness cannot take steps to find a job and a partner which is considered as basic life tasks, their resilience will also be weakened. Individuals who experience loneliness and whose resilience weakens at the same time take their place in society as persons who submit to the demands of authority and become unhappy in society. This study aimed to determine the mediator role of cynicism between the loneliness and resilience of university students who are prospective teachers. The hypothesized model regarding this purpose can be seen in Figure 1

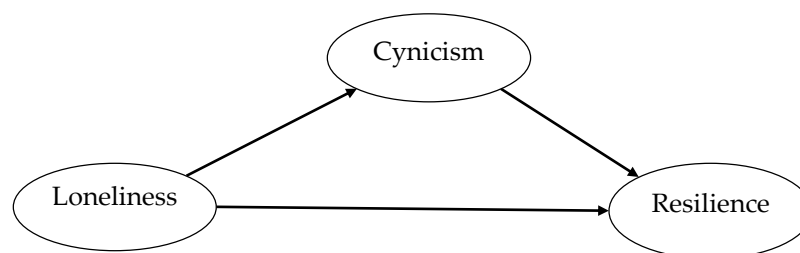


Figure 1. The hypothesized structural model

Method

This study which is investigated the whether or not cynicism mediates the relationship between loneliness and resilience was designed with correlational research in quantitating techniques.

Participants

Convenience sampling method was used in this study. The sample of 302 volunteered teacher candidates from a university in the northwest part of Turkey was recruited between February and May 2018. All of the participants consisted of pre-service teachers. The mean age of the participants was 23.14 years (Standard Deviation = 2.38) with a range from 20 to 35 years. Of these, 58.6% (N = 189) were female and 41.4% (N = 137) were male.

Measures

The data of this study was collected using the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Resilience Scale and the Hunter Cynicism Scale. Detailed information concerning these measures is presented below.

UCLA Loneliness Scale: Loneliness was measured with the UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA-8) developed by Russel, Peplau and Ferguson (1978). The short form of the UCLA-8 was formed by Hays and Dimatteo (1987). The UCLA-8 is a self-report questionnaire with 8 items. Items are rated on 4-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Items include statements such as "I don't have a friend". The total score of the

UCLA-8 was the sum of the 8 items ranging from 8 to 32 with higher scores indicating a higher loneliness level. UCLA-8 was translated into Turkish by Doğan, Çötök and Tekin (2011). UCLA-8 have good construct validity ($\chi^2/df = 1.83$, RMSEA = .05, GFI = .99, AGFI = .96, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, NFI = .99 and SRMR = .03) and internal reliability coefficients (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). In this study, the UCLA-8 also exhibited good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$).

Resilience Scale: Resilience was measured with the Resilience Scale (LWSS) developed by Smith et al. (2008). The RS is a self-report questionnaire with 6 items. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items include statements such as "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times". The total score of the Turkish-RS was the sum of the 6 items ranging from 6 to 30 with higher scores indicating a higher resilience level. RS was translated into Turkish by Doğan (2015). RS have good construct validity ($\chi^2/df = 1.17$, RMSEA = .03, GFI = .99, AGFI = .97, CFI = 1.00, NFI = .84 and SRMR = .019) and internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$) and test-retest reliability coefficients ($\alpha = .97$). In this study, the LWSS also exhibited excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$).

Hunter Cynicism Scale: Cynicism was measured with the Hunter Cynicism Scale (HCS) developed by Lee, Restori and Katz (2010). The HCS is a self-report questionnaire with 21 items and two components (corporate trust and Deceptive behavior). Items are rated on 7-point Likert scale from 1 (disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Items include statements such as "most politicians are honest and trustworthy". The total score of the Turkish-HCS was the sum of the 21 items ranging from 21 to 147 with a higher score indicates a higher cynicism level. HCS was translated into Turkish by Kiraz and Bakioglu (2016). The Turkish version of the HCS have good construct validity ($\chi^2/df = 2.35$, RMSEA = .06, GFI = .88, AGFI = .85, CFI = .94, NNFI = .94 and SRMR = .06) and internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) and test-retest reliability coefficients ($\alpha = .67$). In this study, the HCS also exhibited good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$).

Procedure

The participants completed paper-and-pencil questionnaires in a classroom environment. In the data collection stage of the research, the assessment tools were prepared as a leaflet and distributed to students in a classroom environment, all of whom had volunteered to participate in the research. Before each assessment application, the researchers introduced themselves and explained the importance and purpose of the research. In addition, the researchers told the participants that there would be no individual evaluation and no requirement for identity information and that the results would be used for scientific purposes only. The participants were allowed to answer the questionnaires at their own pace and typically took about 20 minutes to complete all of the sections. In this way, data were collected from a total of 363 adolescents in the study. The data of those that gave up (3 teacher candidates) and those that filled more than half of the scales incompletely (8 teacher candidates) were excluded and the analyses were carried out by using the responses of 302 teacher candidates.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis and correlation analysis were performed in IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the measurement model and mediation models in AMOS Graphics. Mediator analysis examines whether an independent variable, a particular dependent variable, is a direct or a mediating variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). To analyze the mediation effects, we used a two-step procedure. We first tested the measurement model. When the measurement model was satisfactory, we tested the structural model using the maximum likelihood estimation. A parceling technique was used in order to avoid errors sourcing from one-dimensional measures (Little et al. 2002). Two parcels were obtained from the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Resilience Scale.

Several indices of goodness-of-fit were used as criteria for the above model selection. We used $\chi^2/df < 5$, CFI, TLI, GFI, IFI $> .90$, SRMR and RMSEA $< .08$, as the assessment standards of the model fit index (Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum et al., 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). A bootstrap analysis was conducted in order to determine the mediator role of cynicism in the relationship between loneliness and resilience (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The Bootstrapping Confidence interval was estimated in the indirect impact of loneliness on resilience. 10000 resampling and 95% confidence intervals were used in this process.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The relationships among loneliness, resilience, and cynicism levels of teacher candidates were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The analysis was performed in two steps. In the first step, descriptive statistics were determined. In the second step, the hypothesized model was tested. The descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive correlations among study variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. LSPar1	-					
2. LSPar2	.77**	-				
3. RSPar1	-.39**	-.40**	-			
4. RSPar2	-.40**	-.33**	.74**	-		
5. CT	.28**	.19**	-.28**	-.28**	-	
6. DB	.26**	.29**	-.40**	-.33**	.46**	-
M	6.98	7.40	9.32	8.76	62.83	38.16
SD	2.54	2.56	2.74	2.66	9.11	6.18
Skewness	.73	.77	-.19	-.07	-.03	-.07
Kurtosis	-.25	.38	-.58	-.57	.03	-.19

Note. ** $p < .01$, LSPar loneliness parcels, RSPar resilience parcels, CT corporate trust, DB deceptive behavior, M mean, SD standard deviation.

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between Loneliness parcels and cynicism (corporate trust and deceptive behavior) ($r = .19 \leq r \leq .29, p < .01$). There was a significant negative correlation between Loneliness parcels and Resilience parcels ($r = -.33 \leq r \leq -.40, p < .01$). There was a significant negative correlation between resilience parcels and cynicism (corporate trust and deceptive behavior) ($r = -.28 \leq r \leq -.40, p < .01$). The distribution of each variable was normal, with skewness coefficients between $-.19$ and $.77$ and kurtosis coefficients between $-.58$ and $.38$.

Measurement Model

First, we tested the measurement model to assess whether each of the latent variables was represented by their indicators. The measurement model consisted of three latent factors, loneliness, resilience and cynicism, and six observed variables. The measurement model test indicated a satisfactory model fit: $\chi^2(6, N=302) = 20.36, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 3.39; CFI = .98; TLI = .95; GFI = .98; SRMR = .019; RMSEA = .04; C.I. [.36, .81]$. The factor loadings of all the indicators were significant (ranging from $.59$ to $.90, p < .001$), demonstrating that respective indicators are true representative of their latent factors.

Structural Model

In the second phase of the study, the structural equation model was tested in order to determine the mediator role of cynicism in the relationship between loneliness and resilience. The results are presented in Figure 2.

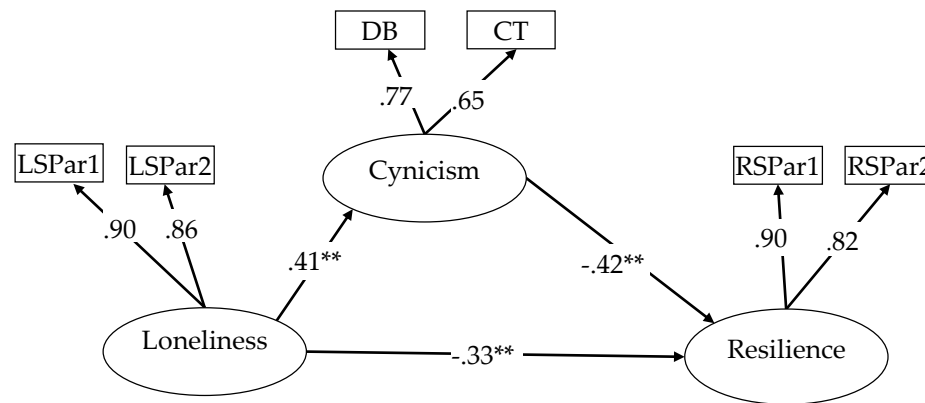


Figure 2. Mediation for cynicism on resilience via loneliness

All path coefficients were observed to be significant in the analysis. Loneliness predicted resilience negatively ($\beta = -.33, p < .01$) and cynicism positively ($\beta = .41, p < .01$). In addition, cynicism predicted resilience negatively ($\beta = -.42, p < .01$). Moreover, the effect coefficient of loneliness predicting resilience through the mediation of cynicism was estimated to be $-.17$. When the fit indexes of the model were examined, all of them were found to be at acceptable levels. The fit indexes were as follows: $\chi^2(6, N = 302) = 20.361, p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 3.393$; GFI = .98; CFI = .98; NFI = .97; TLI = .95; SRMR = .019; RMSEA = .08. Therefore, it can be stated that the structural equation model was confirmed.

10,000 resample bootstrapping were conducted in order to provide additional evidence related to the significance of direct and indirect effects. The bootstrapping coefficients and the lower and upper bounds of 95% confidence intervals are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Bootstrapping results

Model paths	Coefficient	95% C. I.	
		Lower bound	Upper bound
Direct effect			
Loneliness \rightarrow Resilience	-.33	-.46	-.19
Loneliness \rightarrow Cynicism	.41	.27	.54
Cynicism \rightarrow Resilience	-.42	-.56	-.26
Indirect effect			
Loneliness \rightarrow Cynicism \rightarrow Resilience	-.17	-.26	-.10

When Table 2 is examined, it can be seen that all of the effects in the structural equation model were significant. The bootstrapping confidence intervals lower and upper bounds of both the direct and indirect effects comprise not zero. Therefore, it can be stated that the teacher candidates' loneliness had an effect on their resilience through the mediation of cynicism according to the bootstrapping results.

Discussion

Resilience is the use of one's own resources to overcome the difficulties s/he faces. Individuals who use their own resources effectively take their own behaviors as a reference rather than behave in line with the expectations of others. In this study, the mediator role of cynicism in the relationship between loneliness and resilience of Turkish University students was investigated. As expected, the results show that the cynicism plays a mediator role in the relationship between loneliness and resilience. Accordingly, cynicism is positively correlated with loneliness and burnout negatively predicts resilience. In short, it can be expressed that as the

university students' cynicism level increases, their loneliness level increase and resilience level decrease, and vice versa.

In this study, a negative relationship was found between loneliness and resilience. Findings obtained from the review of the related literature support the findings obtained from this study (Perron, Cleverly & Kidd, 2014; Zhao et al., 2018). Loneliness, which is not a matter of conscious choice, is seen as the isolation of the individual from the outside world. Loneliness causes the individual to fail to use the resources other than his/her own to overcome the difficulties s/he faces and his/her resilience to decrease (Copel, 1988). As a negative concept, loneliness constitutes an obstacle for the individual to establish a social relationship, acquire new experiences and be sociable. Furthermore, individuals who are alone can experience helplessness, isolation, and depression (Zhao et al., 2018). The prospective teachers who experience anxiety about being appointed and have fear of being unemployed can experience loneliness when they cannot cope with this situation. The resilience of the prospective teacher who fell into loneliness may weaken. Indeed, loneliness is seen as a factor that causes the resilience of the individual to decrease.

Another finding obtained in this study was that there was a positive relationship between cynicism and loneliness. This finding is similar to the findings obtained from the review of related literature (Borawski, 2018, Neto, 2006). Social loneliness is seen as the individual's withdrawal of himself from social relationships. An individual becomes intimidated when s/he does not establish new social relationships or when the party determining the direction of the relationship in the social relationships that the individual establishes is the authority. In this case, the individual acts in accordance with the wishes and expectations of others instead of using his/her own resources to sustain his/her social relationships. Thus, the individual becomes submissive and chooses to renounce justice, sincerity, and honesty in order to take care of his/her own interests (James, 2005).

As a final note, this study found that cynicism mediated between loneliness and resilience. Individuals who are lonely are open to intimidation (Murphy, 2014). As a matter of fact, individuals who experience loneliness choose to submit to the demands of the authority and become submissive instead of facing the challenges so as to maintain their existence (Murphy, 2014). The resilience of individuals who experience loneliness decreases, too (Gerino et al., 2017). In other words, the resilience of the cynic individuals who are lonely and who shape their behaviors according to the demands of the authority decreases. In the literature, a negative correlation was found between cynicism and resilience (Manzano García & Ayala Calvo, 2012). Individuals who live alone do not trust them, have problems in social relationships, and do not take new initiatives. These individuals are open to others' inducements in their social relationships and daily lives. Thus, they exhibit both submissive behaviors and decreased resilience.

This study was carried out with prospective teachers who are university students. University education coincides with young adulthood period. In this period, basic life duties involve finding a job and a partner. In Turkey, prospective teachers have some difficulties in finding a job after graduation. These challenges include the Public Personnel Selection Test and the teacher selection interview. In the first stage, prospective teachers who get enough scores from the Public Personnel Selection Test are taken to an interview. In order to be successful in the interview, prospective teachers are anticipated to give expected answers to the interviewers. Acting in accordance with the demands and expectations of the authority may lead the prospective teachers to ignore their own self and to become intimidated. Therefore, it can become difficult for prospective teachers to maintain their resilience. Failing to find a job, which is their basic life task, prospective teachers, who are young adults, may choose to opt out or postpone the search for a partner. As a result, they cannot establish a life for themselves and become unhappy.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, it was concluded that cynicism was the mediator variable between loneliness and resilience. The resilience of lonely individuals decreases. In addition, lonely individuals exhibit submissive behaviors. In other words, submissive individuals are abandoned to non-selective loneliness. Individuals who have been abandoned to loneliness and become submissive do not choose to spend efforts to overcome the difficulties they face in their lives. In particular, the creation of platforms which will prevent the isolation of university students and where they will express their ideas will make it possible to support their resilience. University administrations and their stakeholders should allow university students to survive as an individual by providing opportunities for them to develop themselves and socialize. A quota should be determined for educational faculties according to a planning framework after determining the number of teachers needed in each branch in the country. Teacher appointments should be made in accordance with international standards as a permanent and secure job, and thus teachers' concerns about being unemployed should be reduced.

This study has some limitations. The concepts of loneliness, resilience, and cynicism were measured by means of self-reporting tools. For this reason, the social desirability bias may have been involved in the study. As the data of the study were collected from only a single university, the findings cannot be generalized to all university students. This study was conducted in the structural equation model. Qualitative analysis methods can also be employed in future studies to be conducted on this topic.

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