

DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT SCALE IN PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELORS AND GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to develop a valid and reliable scale to determine the level of professional commitment of psychological counselors and guidance counselors. The study includes 470 psychological counselors and guidance counselors by random sampling method. The study data analyzes through reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. According to the exploratory factor analysis, a 29-item, six- subdimensional scale explaining 60% of the total variance is revealed. It is observed that the scale factor loadings are between .422 and .892. Confirmatory factor analysis is performed with the resulting scale sub-dimensions, and as a result of the applications, an acceptable result is obtained between the model and the data ($p=.000$, $\chi^2/sd=2.83$, $CFI=.886$, $TLI=.90$, $RMSEA=.05$). Reliability analyses for the scale are conducted by looking at Cronbach's alpha, Guttman's coefficient and the differences between the lower and upper 27%. The Cronbach alpha total score of the scale is .918 and the Guttman coefficient value is .888. Cronbach's alpha and Guttman's coefficient values for the sub-dimensions are found to be higher than .60 and meet the reliability requirements. It is also observed that there is a significant difference between the lower and upper 27% percentiles ($p<.000$). The item total score correlation values of the scale are examined and it is found that the total score correlation coefficients are be-

tween .302 and .702. All analyses concludes that the Commitment to Profession in Counselors and Guidance Counselors Scale is a valid and reliable scale.

Keywords: Psychological counseling, Guidance, Professional commitment

INTRODUCTION

Profession is defined as a field of work that people acquire through a certain education and use their experiences for the benefit of individuals and society (Aydın, 2012). On the other hand, professional dedication is defined as the commitment and loyalty of professionals to their jobs in or out of their work environments and the extra efforts they make for the effective implementation of their professions (Fırat, et al. 2015). Studies have shown that individuals with high levels of professional commitment establish positive relationships with their colleagues and have high levels of job satisfaction (Aktaş & Gürkan, 2015; Kaya & Zerenler, 2014; Yıldırım & Tösten, 2020; Meriç et al., 2019). Dedication to the profession can be affected by personal characteristics such as age and gender, criteria related to the profession such as compassion fatigue and burnout, and job-related characteristics such as wage and work environment (Doğanülkü & Kırdök, 2020). In the studies, adopting the profession, valuing the profession, dedicating oneself to the profession and making efforts for the profession are shown as sub- dimensions of professional commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Kozikoğlu & Özcanlı, 2020)

The field of Psychological Counseling and Guidance is also one the professions that have a presence in the world and in Türkiye. Psychological Counseling and Guidance first emerged as an educational field in the United States and later developed in the fields of school counseling, mental health, family counseling, rehabilitation counseling, vocational counseling and guidance (Granello & Young, 2012; Gladding, 2021). In the first years of its emergence as a field, it mostly manifested itself in career and vocational counseling practices, but with the industrial revolution and the second world war, it also spread to personal and social areas such as mental health counseling (Ulu Ercan, 2018). Until the 1950s, studies were carried out mostly in the field of guidance, and it was seen that the concept of counseling came to the fore with Carl Rogers' individual-centered theory that puts the client at the center (Leahy et al., 2016). Towards the 1970s, it was seen that the concept of counseling started to be used instead of guidance as the field of psychological counseling and guidance included crisis, grief and trauma situations (Nazlı, 2011). Psychological counseling, which is within the scope of mental health services, can come to the forefront for those working in the field with its challenging, exhausting and demanding aspect that requires dedication to the profession.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the studies on professional dedication are generally carried out on teaching, nursing, and health professionals, and it is observed that the professional dedication scales applied are for teachers and health professionals (Erbir, 2022; Gül & Gül, 2022; Kozikoğlu & Özcanlı, 2020; Kırbaç & Kaya, 2023; Layık et al., 2022; Yıldırım & Atilla, 2019). Although professional commitment studies have been conducted with psychological counselors, it is evident that these studies are limited to the sub-dimensions of professional commitment and career commitment (Doğanülkü & Kırdök, 2020; Tunç & Tunç, 2022). In this context, it is seen that a

scale was needed in the literature to determine the level of professional commitment of psychological counselors and guidance counselors.

In this context, this study was conducted to develop a scale to determine the professional commitment of psychological counselors and guidance counselors. In general, it is known that a profession contains a dynamic in which education is acquired through education and the education acquired is used for the benefit of individuals and societies, and dedication to the profession means that a person adopts, loves, values and strives for the profession. Psychological counseling and guidance, which is a professional field, is applied in schools, hospitals, private counseling centers in areas such as education, mental health, career counseling. It has been seen that the level of psychological counselors' commitment to the profession has been addressed in a limited number of studies and no scale determining the level of psychological counselors' and guidance counselors' commitment to the profession has been found. This study aimed to develop a valid and reliable measurement tool to determine the level of psychological counselors' and guidance counselors' commitment to the profession.

2. METHOD

In this study, a scale development study was conducted using quantitative research method, including scale development process, validity and reliability analysis.

2.1. Working Group

The study group consisted of 470 participants (327 women and 143 men) from different regions and cities of Türkiye. Of the study group, 417 graduated from psychological counseling and guidance, 19 from psychology, 13 from sociology, 10 from philosophy group teaching, and 11 from philosophy undergraduate programs and work as psychological counselors and guidance teachers in the Ministry of National Education. Of the group, 335 have bachelor's degrees, 52 have master's degrees without thesis, 75 have master's degrees with thesis, and 11 have doctorate degrees. The age range of the participants was between 22-55+ and the highest number of participants was between 31-40 (216).

2.3. Data collection

The data were collected through face-to-face interviews with school counselors and guidance counselors by visiting school guidance services. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and the forms were given to the participants and the given form was marked by the participants. For the face validity of the form, a pre-pilot application was applied to 100 psychological counselors and guidance counselors. It was seen that the items were clear and understandable and the form was understood by the participants. Then, 473 psychological counselors and guidance counselors were reached for exploratory factor analysis. The data of three participants were excluded from the study because they were outside the normal distribution. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, 11 of the scale items were removed from the scale because they did not meet the validity criteria. Then, the scale items were applied to 450 psychological counselors and guidance counselors for confirmatory factor analysis.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

2.3.1. Demographic Information Form

It was prepared by the researcher to determine the characteristics of the participants such as gender, age, graduation status, graduation program, number of children, level of supervision training, level of institution of employment and marital status.

2.3.2. Professional Commitment Scale in Psychological Counselors and Guidance Counselors

The scale of professional commitment in psychological counselors and guidance counselors developed within the scope of this study aims to address the professional commitment of psychological counselors and guidance counselors with different sub-dimensions. In the process of preparing the scale, firstly, the literature was reviewed and an item pool was created to address the levels of psychological counselors' and guidance counselors' commitment to the profession. For the item pool, the opinions of 3 professors, 2 associate professors, 5 doctoral graduates were taken and after the items were finalized, a pilot study was conducted with a group of 100 psychological counselors and guidance counselors and the items were revised. Then, the scale was applied to psychological counselors and guidance counselors and 470 participants took part in the study. The scale questions were organized as a five-point Likert-type scale answered as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

2.4. Process

First of all, a comprehensive literature review including professional commitment and its sub-dimensions was conducted. As a result of the literature review, the scale item pool was created to ensure content validity. The items were examined by 3 professors, 2 associate professors and 5 doctoral graduates and a 40-item scale was created with a pilot application as a result of changes on some items, removal of some items from the scale and addition of some items. From the collected data, the data that were outside the normal distribution were excluded from the study. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, 11 items that did not meet the validity criteria were removed from the scale and confirmatory factor analysis was performed. As a result of the applications and analyzes, a valid and reliable scale consisting of 29 items and 6 sub-dimensions was developed.

2.5. Data Analysis

While developing the professional commitment scale in psychological counselors and guidance counselors, the process steps specified after the items were created were followed. Firstly, it was checked whether the data showed normal distribution and it was concluded that the kurtosis and skewness values of the data were between -1 and +1 and showed normal distribution. Exploratory factor analysis and item analysis were used to examine the construct validity of the scale. Confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted. In order to analyze the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha values were examined and it was also investigated whether there was a significant difference

between the lower and upper 27% percentiles. IBM SPSS program was used for data analysis in the study.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

For exploratory factor analysis, Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO and Barlett tests were used to determine the suitability of factor analysis. Büyüköztürk (2002) mentions that the KMO value should be greater than .60 and the chi-square value obtained according to Barlett's test should be significant. In this sense, the factor analysis results of the scale show that it is valid (KMO=.928; Bartlett's $\chi^2=6320,186$; $p<.000$). In addition, Direct Oblimin technique was used to look at the item factor loadings of the scale and the application was repeated and a scale consisting of 29 items and 6 sub-dimensions was obtained. The factor loadings of the items and their distribution according to sub-dimensions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis results of the item factor loadings of the Commitment to Profession Scale in Psychological Counselors and Guidance Counselors

İtem No	Common Variance	1	2	3	4	5	6
ö31	,720	,764					
ö32	,665	,717					
ö21	,479	,701					
ö33	,591	,699					
ö22	,554	,698					
ö34	,450	,679					
ö12	,539	,666					
ö20	,634	,546					
ö4	,764		-,896				
ö1	,841		-,892				
ö36	,781		-,840				
ö2	,690		-,804				
ö38	,675		-,752				
ö3	,668		-,732				
ö5	,546		-,585				
ö26	,642			,755			
ö27	,541			,724			
ö28	,563			,654			
ö29	,436			,510			
ö14	,701				,762		
ö13	,693				,748		
ö18	,471				,579		
ö7	,638					-,746	
ö6	,594					-,670	
ö17	,506					-,580	
ö8	,444					-,422	
ö39	,629						,733
ö37	,573						,685
ö40	,481						,529

As seen in Table 1, the scale factor loadings ranged between .422 and .896 and explained 60% of the total variance. Scale item loadings do not exhibit overlapping and are presented in 6 sub- dimensions. Scree plot was also utilized to support the validity of the scale. Figure 1 shows the scree plot after the analyses and it is seen that it shows a break after the 6th factor. Therefore, the scale consists of a 6-factor structure.

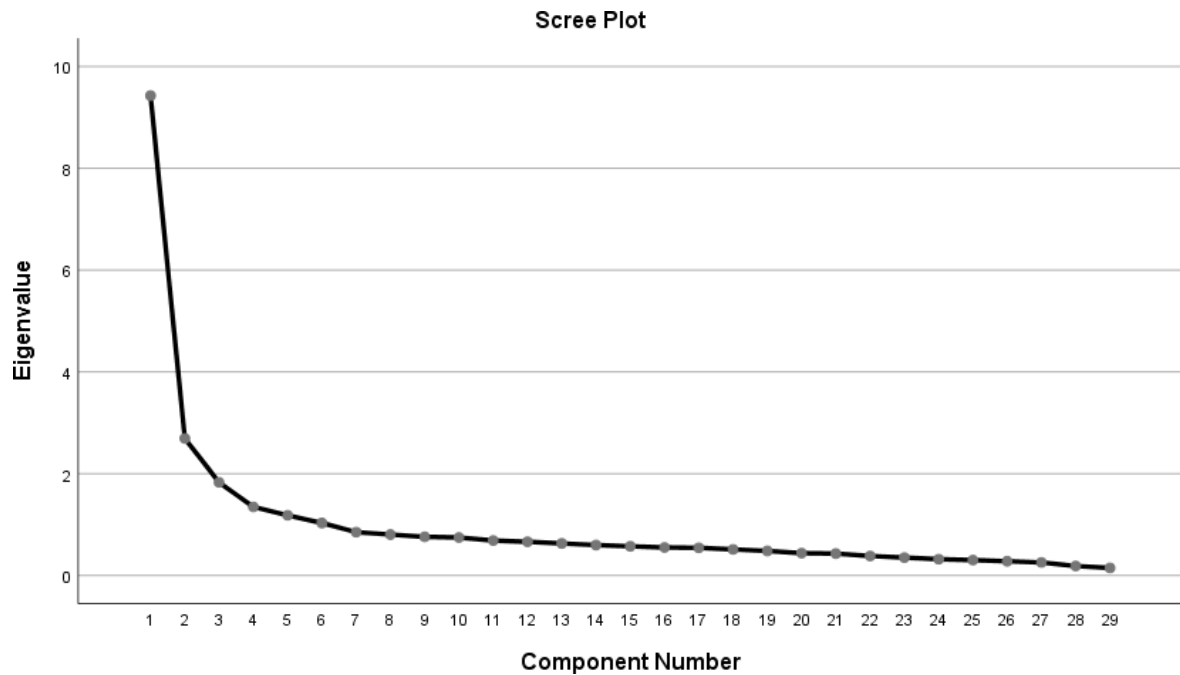


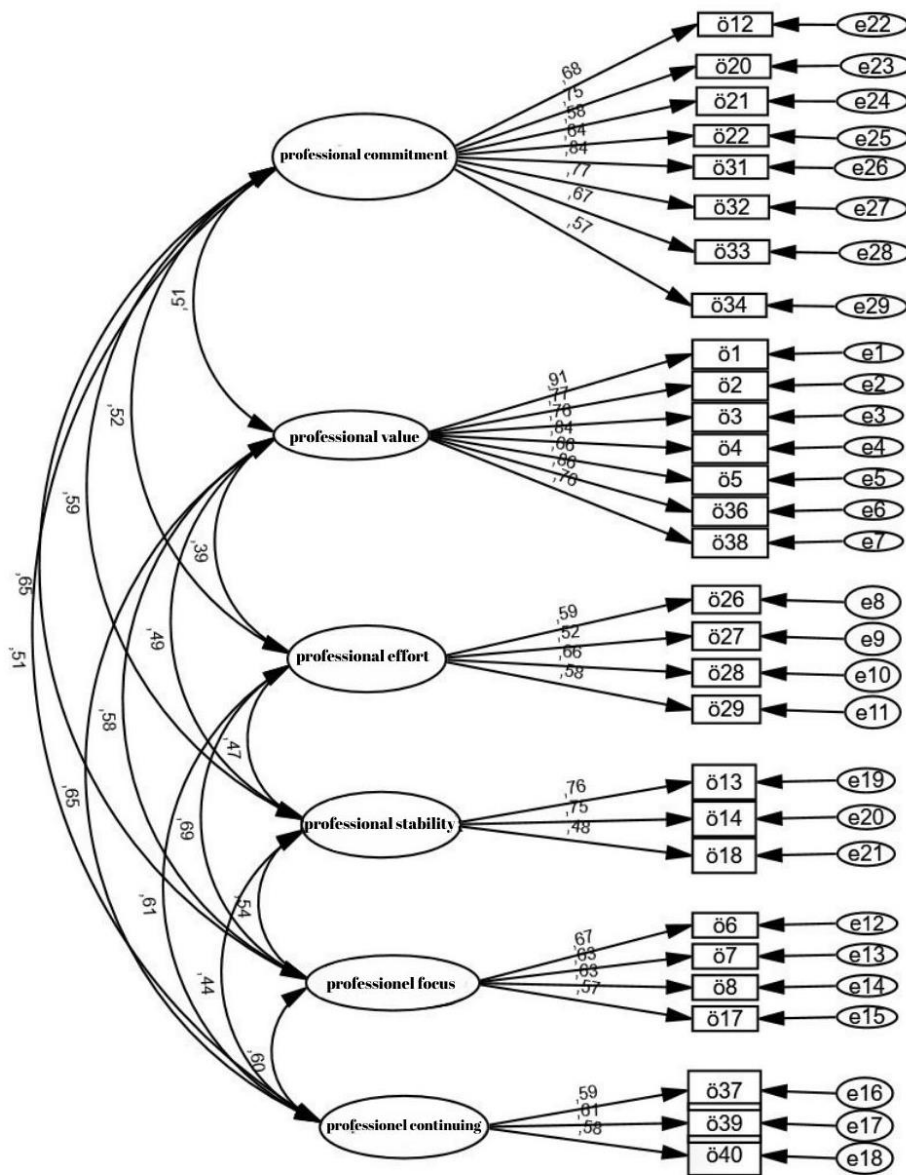
Figure 1. Slope line graph

With this graph, the sub-dimensions were named. The first sub-dimension was named as valuing the profession, the second sub-dimension as commitment to the profession, the third sub-dimension as showing extra effort for the profession, the fourth sub-dimension as commitment to the profession, the fifth sub-dimension as desire to continue the profession, and the sixth sub-dimension as focusing on the profession. The sub-dimension of valuing the profession consists of eight items (12, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32, 33, 34), the sub-dimension of commitment to profession consists of 7 items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 36, 38), the sub-dimension of making extra effort for profession consists of 4 items (26, 27, 28, 29), 3 items (13, 14, 18), 4 items (6, 7, 8, 17) and 3 items (37, 39, 40) in the sub-dimension of determination in the profession.

3.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to confirm the 29-item model consisting of six dimensions that emerged as a result of the exploratory factor analysis. Maximum likelihood estimation was used to perform these analyses. This analysis is a method that selects possible parameters (Şimşek, 2007). With these analyses, CFI, RMSEA, and TLI values are examined. TLI and CFI values above .90 are acceptable, while values greater than .95 are perfect. For the RMSEA value, being less than .05 means perfection and being less than .08 means acceptability (Kline, 2013; Wang & Wang, 2012).

According to the confirmatory factor analysis, it was observed that there was a good fit between the model and the data ($p=.000$, $\chi^2/sd= 2,83$, $CFI=.886$, $TLI=.90$, $RMSEA=.05$). Figure 2 shows the item prediction values of the professional commitment scale in psychological counselors and guidance counselors.



CMIN/df:2,381; AGFI:.863; GFI:.886; NFI:.867; CFI:.918; IFI:.918; TLI:.907; RMSEA:.054

Figure 2. Schematic of Professional Commitment Scale in Psychological Counselors and Guidance Counselors

As seen in Figure 2, it was observed that the scale items were significant parameter estimators in the confirmatory factor analyses applied as a result of the research ($p < .05$). It was observed that the item predictive values in the scale were between .48 and .91.

3.3. Reliability

After naming the sub-dimensions of the scale, reliability analyses were conducted for each sub-dimension and Cronbach's alpha and Guttman's coefficient values were examined and it was examined whether there was a significant difference between the lower and upper 27%. The Cronbach's alpha and Guttman coefficient values of the scale sub-dimensions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Analyses of Commitment to Profession Scale in Psychological Counselors and Guidance Counselors

Professional Commitment Scale in Psychological Counselors and Guidance Counselors	Cronbach's Alpha	Guttman Coefficient
Valuing the profession	.865	.868
Commitment to the profession	.923	.927
Extra labor for the profession	.676	.678
Commitment to the profession	.685	.691
Desire to continue the profession	.716	.721
Focus on the profession	.600	.600
Total	.918	.888

When the literature is examined, it is stated that reliability analysis values greater than .60 is a sufficient reliability result (Tavşancıl, 2005; Karasar, 2009). When the above values are examined, it is seen that the sub-dimensions are greater than .60 and only the sub-dimension of focusing on the profession is around .60. Kline (2013) mentions that item total score correlation coefficients should be greater than .30. In the analyzes, it was observed that the item total score correlation coefficients were between .302 and .702. According to the evaluations made, the total scale reliability and sub-dimensions reliability values show that the scale is a reliable scale.

In order to strengthen the reliability analysis, independent samples t-test was used to examine whether there was a significant difference between the lower and upper 27% and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent samples t-test between lower and upper 27% percentiles

Group	n	\bar{x}	Ss	Sd	t	p
Top	127	129	1,02	252	35,144	,000
Alt	127	93	1,02			

p<.05

It is observed in Table 3 that there is a significant difference between the lower and upper 27% and the scale meets the required reliability requirement ($p<.000$).

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

When the literature was examined, it was seen that there were some scales to determine the professional commitment of experts working in both mental health and education (Çetin & Keklik, 2020; Demir, 2024; Erbir, 2022; Gül & Gül, 2022; Kırbaç & Kaya, 2023; Kozikoğlu, 2020; Sarıbaş et al., 2020; Sarı, 2019; Şafak et al., 2023). However, there was no measurement tool that addresses the level of professional commitment of psychological counselors and guidance counselors working in the field of mental health and education. In this respect, this study was important for determining/identifying the level of professional commitment of psychological counselors and guidance counselors serving in many fields and institutions in Türkiye, supporting the studies to be conducted in this field and filling this gap in the literature. While creating the scale, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, an item pool consisting of 40 items was created by academicians and experts to address the field of psychological counseling and guidance, data were collected, and as a result of the necessary analysis, a valid and reliable measurement tool consisting of 29 items and 6 sub-dimensions was developed. There were no reverse items in the scale. A total score is obtained both in the sub-dimensions and in the overall scale. A high score on the scale meant that the level of professional commitment is high and a low score meant that the level of professional commitment is low.

In order for a scale to be valid, the importance of content validity and face validity was mentioned and it was emphasized that the dimensions of the factor structure of the scale should be examined (Chang et al., 2010; DeVellis, 2014). When the results were analyzed, it was concluded that the resulting scale was a multidimensional scale. In the exploratory factor analyses, it was observed that the factor loadings of 29 non-overlapping items, which explained 60% of the total variance

and whose item factor loadings were greater than .40, were in a single sub-dimension after the overlapping items were removed from the scale. It was observed that the KMO value of the scale was .928 and this result provided the necessary criteria for the validity of the scale. It is considered sufficient that the KMO value of the scale is greater than .60 (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

The Cronbach's alpha, Guttman's coefficient and the significance between the lower and upper 27% of the scale were analyzed and it was concluded that the total

Cronbach's alpha and Guttman's coefficient values of the scale were sufficient and the scale met the necessary conditions for a reliable measurement tool.

As a result, a valid and reliable measurement tool consisting of 29 items and 6 sub-dimensions was developed to determine the level of professional commitment of psychological counselors and guidance counselors. This scale can support studies on psychological counselors and guidance counselors in which the relationship between professional commitment and many other variables could be addressed. It could be used to address the effectiveness of the trainings given to psychological counselors and guidance counselors. Solutions can be brought by revealing the relationship between psychological counselors' and guidance counselors' dedication to the profession and various variables in a descriptive way. This study was limited to the responses of people who voluntarily participated in the research and could be addressed with larger study groups.

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