# Determining the Training Needs Regarding the "Structuring Dimension" in the Individual Counselling Process

*Hafız Bek* (Assistant Professor)
Department of Guidance and Psychological Counselling, Usak University, Turkey

*Hakan Gülveren* (Assistant Professor)
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Usak University, Turkey

**Abstract:**
     The psychological counselling process is commenced with structuring. Since the clients do not know what to do or what is expected of them in psychological counselling sessions, counsellors are required to provide information about the process in this dimension. 20 students (12 female, 8 male) who took Individual Counselling Course in the spring term of 2019 - 2020 academic year constitute the study group. Phenomenology method, one of qualitative research methods, was employed in the current study. Audio recordings of counsellor candidates from eight sessions were classified according to categories based on the sub-divisions of the structuring dimension. In light of the data obtained, the training needs and qualification levels of counsellor candidates were attempted to be revealed. When the results of the sub-division of information about the counselling, the first stage of the structuring dimension, were examined, it was observed that counsellor candidates did not have a significant problem in terms of this skill. In the sub-division of explaining the processes and principles of structuring dimension, counsellor candidates were observed to have difficulty in the skill to provide accurate information about the process. On the contrary, at the end of the supervision during the second and third sessions, it was indicated that, in terms of the related skill, their qualification levels increased and there were no problems in the subsequent sessions. Concerning the data regarding the sub-division of the objective of structuring dimension, it was determined that the counsellor candidates had difficulty in the skill to clarify the boundaries of the counselling process. Therefore, certain training regarding this skill is required.

## Introduction
     Article Therapeutic skills have been stated as a significant element of psychological counselling process. Among these skills is the structuring skill. This skill is a skill that is to be used in the first session of the psychological counselling process. Since majority of the clients received psychological assistance and are experiencing this for the first time, the structuring process and skill should be used well (Eryılmaz & Mutlu-Süral, 2014). The clients who seek psychological

assistance for the first time may not have the necessary information about the psychological counselling and the process. Therefore, at the onset of the counselling process, the client should be given the necessary information concerning the process. As the client is more aware about the process, it becomes more likely for the process to proceed successfully and to yield a solution to the client's problem. For this reason, the psychological counsellor is required to be able to use the structuring skill well during the psychological counselling process. Nevertheless, in the period since the emergence of psychological counselling, numerous studies have been carried out through which the factors that influence the therapeutic relationship between the psychological counsellor and the client were investigated. According to the results of these studies, therapeutic conditions, counsellor's characteristics, skills, and psychological counsellor's perceptions of these characteristics have been identified as the variables affecting the therapeutic relationship (Lent, Hill & Hoffman, 2003; Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Denizli, 2009; Cormier, Nurius & Osborn, 2016; İkiz & Totan, 2014; Meydan, 2015; Sanberk, 2016). However, this process is still being discussed from different perspectives and the qualifications that psychological counsellors should keep improving themselves.

When the studies related to the process and results of psychological counselling in Turkey were examined, Deniz (2009) highlighted the limited number of the studies. Besides, it was thought that the studies to be conducted in the country may make significant contributions both to psychological counselling training and to the development of psychological counselling approaches that are specific to the country's culture.

In their study, Şahin, Togay and Atıcı (2019) stated that the counselling candidates were important in terms of ensuring an effective therapeutic assistance that facilitates the progress of the counselling process and the build of trust and the establishment of therapeutic relationship. As stated by the psychological counsellor candidates who participated in the study, it may be said that having a healthy and trust-based counselling environment and process depends on their structuring skills. It may be possible to achieve the goal of the counselling process depending on the level and qualification of the counsellor candidates. On the contrary, when the results of the same study and the therapeutic skills used by the counsellor candidates were examined, it was determined that the candidates used the structuring skill the least.

When the objectives of psychological counselling training programs were examined, it was seen that it is fundamental to improve the qualifications that counsellor candidates are required to use in the counselling process (Johnson et al., 1989; Yüksel, 2003; Korkut, 2007; Korkut & Mızıkacı, 2009; Aladağ, 2014). Meydan (2014) emphasized the uncertainty regarding "the qualification areas of psychological counselling" in Turkey and articulated that there is a controversial issue in regard to what way and which qualification areas Psychological and Guidance Counselling (PGC) undergraduate programs should be structured. However, considering that psychological counselling skills training is an integral part of psychological counsellor training, it was thought that psychological counsellor skills training program needs to be structured and carried out more effectively.

Inskipp (2004) states that the fact an individual is competent in the skills required for counselling does not necessarily mean that s/he may be a good consultant. However, Inskipp (2004) also stated that it is unlikely for an under-skilled consultant to provide assistance to his/ her clients. In this respect, the question "What skills should be gained in psychological counselling training?" becomes very significant. Prior to the skills training program to be prepared, there are certain topics to be explored, discussed, and agreed with the course team and certain important preliminary preparations and certain questions to be answered. These questions are as follows: "What skills

will be taught in the program?", "With what content and activity will the skills be taught?", "Who will teach?", "How will the skills be taught?", "How will students receive feedback?", and "How will the final evaluation be?"

Gysbergs and Henderson (2012) highlighted that identifying students' needs in the guidance curriculum development model consisting of the stages of planning, designing, implementation, and evaluation is crucial since it refers to the qualifications expected of the students. It may be considered in the same way in a curriculum that is intended to be used for the counselling candidates training. In addition, the needs specified may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the prepared training curricula. Owens, Pernice-Duca, and Thomas (2009) investigated the post-education needs of high school counsellor and touched upon the impacts of psychological counsellor training curricula.

The current study is expected to contribute to psychological counselling skills training centres upon the competencies of structuring skill based on Developmental Comprehensive Supervision Model. It attempts to determine whether there is a training need regarding this skill by defining the level at which counselling candidates use their structuring skill during the counselling process. Considering education as a whole of planned activities, the training curriculum is a vital instrument in providing this plan. The first step of curriculum development in education is the needs analysis in the field where the curriculum is intended to be developed. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) defined needs analysis as a series of systematic processes carried out with the purposes of making decisions and establishing principles about the curriculum or corporate development and the division of institutional resources. The concept of need, however, may be regarded as the difference between the existing situation and the desired situation (Sönmez et al., 2019; Galport & Azzam, 2016). Through the right needs specified by a well-established needs analysis, accurate assessments regarding the curriculum may be made (Hewitt, 2006).

### Developmental Comprehensive Supervision Model

The Developmental Comprehensive Supervision Model developed by Eryılmaz and Mutlu shows that the current study was built on three phases and six stages. The purpose of strengthening phase is to identify counsellor candidates' qualifications prior to the psychological counselling process and to improve their competencies by informing them based on their qualification levels. The other phase, development, consists of two characteristics. First, it is the observation of what is learnt in the dimensions of structuring, therapeutic skills and conditions, and the management of therapeutic process and of what is applied in therapeutic process. Second, it is the monitoring of the levels of development in the dimension of counsellor competencies by enhancing advanced psychological knowledge of the individual included in the supervision. However, the evaluation phase includes the assessment of development and supervision (Eryılmaz & Mutlu-Süral, 2014; Eryılmaz & Mutlu, 2018).

### Structuring

In psychological counselling, structure is defined as a common understanding between the counsellor and the client regarding the characteristics, conditions, procedures, and parameters of psychological counselling. Structuring refers to the interactive process in which the structure is reached. Constructing is a means in which the counsellor and the client together define the guidelines governing the counselling process, possibly involving activities such as information, advice, negotiation, stipulation, contracting, and settlement (Day, Sparacio & Griffin, 1980). It is the skill used in the first session of the counselling process in order to provide information to the

client by the counsellor about the process and rules. The fact that the psychological counsellor is competent in the skills related to structuring contributes to the process to be continued and concluded successfully. The skills expected to be found in the counsellor candidates based on the Developmental Comprehensive Supervision Model include the ability to manage time, inform the client, provide information about the process, and clarify the objective (Eryılmaz & Mutlu-Süral, 2014).

In the present study, it was determined that how the time, process and objective determination skills that were required to be present in counselling candidates in the structuring process based on Developmental Comprehensive Supervision Model differed in practice, and the deficiencies identified were considered as training needs. In this regard, this study is expected to guide the training curricula to be prepared in psychological counselling training.

The current study aims to reveal how the time, process, and objective determination skills that were required to be present in counselling candidates in the structuring process that constitutes individual counselling process differed in practice and whether there is a training need regarding these skills. Within the framework of Developmental Comprehensive Supervision Model, the counsellor candidates' qualification levels and training needs were examined by focusing on their abilities to provide consistent information about the duration, to provide accurate information about the psychological counselling process, to express the principles of psychological counselling, and to clarify the boundaries of the psychological counselling.

**Method**

In the present study that was intended to determine the counsellor candidates' managing skills of the structuring process, phenomenology method, one of qualitative research methods, was employed. Qualitative data analysis is a process in which researcher organizes the data, divides it into units, synthesizes it, reveals patterns, explore significant variables, and decides what information to include in his/ her report (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Walcott, 1994). Content analysis is mainly based on the analysis of written and visual data. In content analysis, categories related to the research subject are generated and then, words and sentences are assigned to these categories in accordance with the data obtained from the candidates examined and, finally, counting are performed (Silverman, 2001). In the study, the recordings of 8 sessions carried out by counselling candidates who participated in the study were obtained and classified as categories (given in Table 1), which are created based on the sub-divisions of the structuring process. Through the data obtained, the qualifications and training needs of counsellor candidates were revealed.

**Table 1. The Sub-divisions of Structuring Dimension and Its Reference Behaviours**

| Sub-divisions | Behaviours |
|---|---|
| Duration | S/he provided consistent information about the duration. |
| Process | S/he provided accurate information about psychological counselling process. |
| | S/he provided the entire information about psychological counselling process. |
| | S/he expressed the principles of psychological counselling. |
| Objective | S/he clarified the boundaries of psychological counselling. |

In line with the data obtained from the audio recordings of the counsellor candidates during

eight sessions, words and sentences were assigned to these categories and counting was carried out. In the findings section, codes ranging from CC-1 to CC-20 were given instead of their names in order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Although the study was based on the audio recordings of the counsellor candidate-client sessions, from time to time, either with the group or one-to-one counsellor, candidate-supervisor negotiations were conducted to have a better understanding of candidates' behaviours.

**The Study Group**
20 students (12 female, 8 male) who took Individual Counselling Course in the spring term of 2019 - 2020 academic year constitute the study group.

**Data Collection Instruments**
Within the scope of Individual Counselling Course, candidates were requested to perform eight sessions, and audio recording were asked for each of the sessions. The candidates were, then, asked to decode the recordings. The data on student qualifications are based on these sources. Since these qualifications were required to be examined in terms of certain criteria and categories, "Counsellor Qualifications Evaluation Form" to be used in "Developmental Comprehensive Supervision Model" developed by Eryılmaz and Mutlu-Süral (2014) was employed. The form includes four main sections and sub-sections: *structuring* (duration, process, objective), *therapeutic conditions* (concreteness, transparency, empathy, here and now, respect), *therapeutic skills* (invitation to speak, reflecting feelings, minimal encouragement, reflection of content, personalization, self-addition, self-disclosure, summarization and confrontation skills), and *managing therapeutic process* (managing the client, managing self and managing the counselling process). If the candidate completely exhibited the behaviour included in the form, 'Adequate' option was marked and if s/he did not, 'Inadequate' option was marked. However, if s/he did not exhibit the behaviours, 'Not Observed' option was marked. From the data obtained from this form, the answers were determined based on which fundamental skills and at what levels the candidates showed and what skills they did not exhibit.

**Findings Concerning the Sub-division of the Duration of Structuring Dimension in the Psychological Counselling Process**
Table 2 show the results of the observation regarding counsellor candidates' time management skills under the structuring dimension.

**Table 2. The Data on the Sub-division of Duration of Structuring Dimension in the Psychological Counselling Process**

| Sessions | Qualification | |
|---|---|---|
| | | The ability to provide consistent information about the duration |
| The First Session | Adequate | 13 |
| | Inadequate | 7 |
| Further Sessions | Adequate | 20 |
| | Inadequate | - |

To provide consistent information about the duration of the psychological counselling

process is included in the first stage of structuring dimension. Giving explicit information to the client about the counselling duration may contribute to the counselling process. Moreover, it can also be considered as an ice-breaker to arrange the relations between the counsellor and the client in the first session. It is, therefore, important that counsellor candidates acquire this skill. As seen in Table 2, when the audio recording of the counsellor candidates' sessions was examined, it was found that the candidates did not have a significant problem regarding the sub-division of "duration" of structuring dimension in the counselling process. Thirteen candidates were observed to provide information about the duration of the psychological counselling process; however, it was seen that the behaviour to provide consistent information to the client about the duration increased in further sessions.

According to Table 2, only thirteen counsellor candidates were seen to provide consistent information to the client about the duration of the psychological counselling process in the first session at expected level. No unfavourable implementation concerning this skill was observed in other sessions. In the counselling process, "the ability to provide consistent information about the psychological counselling process" is an important skill. Moreover, this skill is needed in order for the counselling process to proceed and end successfully. In other words, the counselling candidates should be able to use this skill in the first sessions of the counselling process as well as in the further sessions when necessary. As shown in Table 2, it was observed that this skill was acquired in subsequent sessions. According to the findings, it may be concluded that there is no significant problem experienced by the candidates regarding this skill, and that the candidates do not have difficulty in using this skill during counselling process. Therefore, it can be said that there is no training need in terms of "The ability to provide consistent information about the duration." Examples of the candidates' ability "to provide consistent information about the duration" based on the audio recordings are as follows:

*CC-1. "We think that the psychological counselling process will consist of 8 sessions and each session will last 40 minutes. The number of sessions, of course, may vary and increase."*

CC-1 gives clear information to the client about the duration of the psychological counselling process; on the contrary, s/he does not provide information on how the number of sessions may vary.

*CC-6. "Our counselling sessions will last 40-50 minutes, and during this process, we will focus on an issue that affects your life the most and has psychological effects on your life, and we will move forward on what you have brought ..."*

CC-6 informs the client about the duration of the psychological counselling process; nonetheless, the mistake made by the candidate is that s/ he did not provide information about the number of sessions and clarify the duration of the sessions.

*CC-12 "Our interviews consist of eight sessions. We will hold one session every week. Each session will last 40 minutes."*

CC-12 communicates the number and duration of the sessions to the client as expected. In terms of "The ability to provide consistent information about the duration" in the sub-division of

duration, although certain candidates were unable to fulfil the skill at the beginning of the counselling process, it was determined that they were able to use this skill as expected in the subsequent sessions since the supervisor made explanations on how to administer this skill during the interviews with the candidates.

**Findings Concerning the Sub-division of the Process of Structuring Dimension in the Psychological Counselling Process**

Table 3 presents the results of the observation towards counsellor candidates' ability to provide information about psychological counselling process and to express the principles of the process.

**Table 3. The Data on the Sub-division of the Process of Structuring Dimension in Psychological Counselling Process**

| Sessions | | Qualifications | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | The ability to provide accurate information about the psychological counselling process | The ability to express the principles of psychological counselling |
| 1 | Adequate | 8 | 6 |
| | Inadequate | 12 | 14 |
| 2 | Adequate | 11 | 12 |
| | Inadequate | 9 | 8 |
| 3 | Adequate | 15 | – |
| | Inadequate | 5 | – |
| 4 | Adequate | 20 | 3 |
| | Inadequate | – | – |
| 5 | Adequate | 20 | 2 |
| | Inadequate | – | – |
| 6 | Adequate | 20 | 1 |
| | Inadequate | – | – |
| 7 | Adequate | 20 | 2 |
| | Inadequate | – | – |
| 8 | Adequate | 20 | – |
| | Inadequate | – | – |

"The ability to provide accurate information about the psychological counselling process" is one of the key elements in the structuring process of counselling. According to Table 3, it was seen that counselling candidates were not sufficiently capable of providing accurate information about the psychological counselling process quantitatively in the first session. The candidates were found to make mistakes in using this skill.

In the first session, CC-2 was unable to express the content of the counselling process properly by saying "*I would like to have such an interview with you due to the practices of*

*Individual Counselling Course. We are going to have eight sessions together and we can talk about anything you want. I will help you.*" In a counselling process, it is necessary to focus on the problem that the client considers to be the priority and the most important instead of any problem, or to uncover the problem that bothers the client. Nevertheless, since these sessions were held as a requirement of this course and the counselling candidates found the clients on their own, they may have missed out this situation. Furthermore, it can also be said that it is a more professional approach and expression to say that "*I will try to help you to solve the problem that you are here for*" instead of saying such an ambitious expression in a psychological counselling process that "*I will help you*".

In a psychological counselling process, the counsellor is required to provide information at the onset of the counselling process; thus, it is likely to develop an understanding regarding the relationship between the counsellor and the client. In other words, the counsellor is able to commence the process by establishing the therapeutic bond. Otherwise, the client starts the counselling process with the wrong expectation. Clients who have not received any prior psychological support or have no experience about psychological counselling may often have the wrong thoughts or certain misconceptions during the psychological counselling process. This thought or bias may lead to an approach that there is going to be a sudden solution to their problems at the end of the first session of the clients. As a result, the counsellor has to give accurate information about the psychological counselling process.

CC-20. "*Listen, I needed psychological support while I was studying. It's a condition that anybody can experience, think of it as a disease; we are human beings after all. We can sit here like friends and talk about our problems. It doesn't matter how many hours or sessions*"

As seen in the example above, CC-20 provides incorrect information about the number and duration of the sessions, directs the client to a false expectation, and leads a false client-counsellor relationship by saying "like two friends".

The ability to provide accurate information about the psychological counselling process is a skill that is required to be used at the onset of the counselling process; however, it is also a skill that should be used later in the process when informing the client about the functioning of the process. This skill may be needed in case the client has different requests from the counsellor during the counselling process. As seen in Table 3, the candidates had difficulties in "the ability to provide accurate information about the psychological counselling process" in the first session. Nonetheless, in the second and third sessions, thanks to the interviews with the supervisor, their qualification levels were observed to increase and there were no problems in the subsequent sessions in terms of this skill.

"The ability to express the principles of psychological counselling" is a skill that should be used at the onset of the psychological counselling process and in the further stages of the process when necessary. Table 3 indicates that six candidates were able to fulfil this skill as expected in the first session and fourteen candidates explained the principles of counselling process but, however, made certain mistakes. The mistakes made by the counsellor candidates while explaining the principles of counselling process are as follows:

CC-14. "*I'm so glad that you are here voluntarily. Because it's an advantage for us. For volunteering. Besides, telling about yourself will help us move on faster. I mean I really*

*appreciate you are volunteering.*

Client. "*Not at all… You know, it's good for me to talk to someone. I don't usually talk to anyone. That's why I'm here thinking that I could have a friend that I can talk. I came here thinking that it will be good. I hope I can help you, I can credit to you.*"

CC-14 was seen to emphasize the importance of volunteering in the psychological counselling process; however, it is unlikely to say that it was sufficient. The counsellor candidate uses an expression to state his/her gratitude to the client, meaning that "*If it weren't you, I wouldn't be able to have these sessions, thank you*". The process that needs to be maintained professionally was damaged at the beginning.

CC-16. "*We are going to move on the basis of the privacy policy. When necessary, we may reconsider it. Our counselling process is held as a matter of mutual volunteerism. So, what was the problem that led you to the psychological counselling process?*"

CC-16 did not inform the client about what the privacy was and why they would reconsider it over time and what was meant by voluntarily, and after that, s/he started the interview directly with the question "What was the problem that led you to the psychological counselling process?" Since each client does not know and does not have to know the principles at the heart of the psychological counselling process, the counsellor candidates are required to provide information about these principles in order to establish trust between themselves and their clients. To express the principles of psychological counselling process, the correct example is provided below:

CC-12. "*…we are going to hold our sessions based on the principle of privacy. To put it very simply, the privacy principle is to pay attention to keep the client's secrets during guidance services. That means I won't share your secrets with any institution or person without your permission. On the contrary, if there is a situation on the benefit of the client, then we may need to reconsider this privacy policy. We may have to share your information in order to receive help form a third party to solve your problem. If necessary, we will sit and talk about it together.*"

As shown in the example above, CC-12 was observed to properly fulfil "The ability to express the principles of psychological counselling process." S/he expressed the principle to the client and explained in which case the privacy policy might be reviewed.

When Table 3 was examined, it was seen that the counsellor candidates reuse the counselling principles in the following sessions. Reminding the client of the counselling principles during the counselling process from time to time may contribute to the process.

CC-11. "*…I respect your opinion. We are in the middle of the process, and I think we have done well in solving the problem. If you stop this process now, our efforts will be in vain. But as I said in our first session, counselling is voluntary. If you want to quit, I can't force you to continue. If you want, we can continue, which I think is good, and if you don't want to, we can end our counselling process here.*"

The client of CC-11 stated that s/he wanted to stop counselling process for some reason, and the counsellor candidate reminded s/he the principle of volunteering and left the decision on

whether the process was ended.

### Findings Concerning the Sub-division of the Objectives of Structuring Dimension in Psychological Counselling Process

In the sub-division of the objective of structuring dimension in the psychological counselling process, what is expected of the counsellor is to clarify the boundaries of the counselling process. The fact that the boundaries of the psychological counselling process are clarified may contribute to establishing the roles of the client and counsellor. Besides, the counsellor's ability to manage the process well may prevent the client from managing the counselling process upon his/ her wishes. Therefore, the ability to clarify the boundaries of the psychological counselling process is regarded as a crucial skill. Table 4 contains the data concerning this skill.

**Table 4. The Data on the Sub-division of the Objectives of Structuring Dimension in Psychological Counselling Process**

| Sessions | | Qualification |
|---|---|---|
| | | The ability to clarify the boundaries of the psychological counselling process |
| 1 | Adequate | 5 |
| | Inadequate | 15 |
| 2 | Adequate | 7 |
| | Inadequate | 13 |
| 3 | Adequate | 10 |
| | Inadequate | 10 |
| 4 | Adequate | 11 |
| | Inadequate | 9 |
| 5 | Adequate | 11 |
| | Inadequate | 9 |
| 6 | Adequate | 15 |
| | Inadequate | 5 |
| 7 | Adequate | 16 |
| | Inadequate | 4 |
| 8 | Adequate | 17 |
| | Inadequate | 3 |

According to Table 4, it was determined that the counselling candidates had difficulty in their ability to clarify the boundaries of the psychological counselling process. The supervision process following the sessions was relatively successful in acquiring this skill; however, it was not sufficient to gain the skill entirely.

Establishing the boundaries of the counselling process between the client and counsellor allows for mutual respect and a consistent and reliable relationship (Bek & Gülveren, 2021). When the counsellor determines the boundaries of the counselling process well, it may facilitate the client to become aware of the problem and reach a solution. The counsellor should determine the role of himself/ herself and the client in the process and act within the framework of professional ethics in

the interventions of the client to the counsellor and the counsellor to the client. Based on the audio recordings, an example of the correct use of this skill is presented below:

*CC-9.* "*What we are talking here will be between us. But there may be situations that I can ask my lecturer for help to help you by your consent. And again, only your problem will be centred upon, not to say who you are.*"

As seen in the example above, the counsellor candidate clarifies the boundaries of counselling process and adheres to the counselling principles by stating that s/he may convey the situation to his/ her lecturer when necessary on the condition that the personal information is kept confidential.

*CC-11.* "*Yes, what we talk about will remain between us, but, in case of a judicial situation or in case we think you will harm yourself, the information will be conveyed to the related parties. The main purpose of this is, of course, to help you.*"

In the example above, the counsellor candidate explained the conditions under which the information related to the client may be shared with related parties and for what purpose the information may be conveyed to other parties, and thus, clarified the counselling process.

During the counselling process, it was also determined that the clients put the candidates in a difficult situation particularly on the duration. In such a case, two different practices were observed to emerge. In the sixth session, the client requested to continue the session although the session period ended, and the counsellor candidate continued the session by saying that "*Well, I have no other work anyway, we can continue*". In this case, it was the client, not the consultant, who set the boundaries of the counselling. Indeed, the counsellor candidate should have reminded the client who pushed the limits on the duration of the session that their session was ended and that they could continue in the next session. The counsellor candidate's lack of professional experience has led him/ her to carry out such an application.

In the fourth session, the client wanted to discuss the problems and uncertainty of his/ her professional career and the likelihood of changing his field of work and gravitating to another field. However, the counsellor candidate clarified the boundaries of the counselling and acted appropriately by not allowing the problem to dissipate by stating that "*First of all, our time is over, so we will continue in our next session. Besides, since this reveals a different situation from our main problem, we need to focus on the causes and solutions of your uncertainty that you experience about your career*".

The counsellor may ask the client to perform certain tasks (assignments) related to the problem and evaluate the results during the interview together with the client. These tasks are of importance in that the client is given the opportunity to evaluate his/ her trust, desire to change and for self-evaluation. The counsellor is required to set the boundaries well for such assignments.

*CC-5.* "*In the previous session, I asked you to talk to your teacher and prepare for a certain topic of the lesson and explain it in front of the class. What did you do about it?*"
*Client.* "*Well.. Actually, I really wanted to, but… the teacher didn't say anything. He didn't say either yes or no. So, I mean, I didn't insist.*"

*CC-5.* "*But you know why we are giving this task. We would see whether you could easily make a speech in front of your friends by using the techniques we talked about. If you don't do as we*

*talk, we won't get the results that we expect from the counselling. I certainly want you to make this.*"

As shown in the example above, the counsellor candidate informs the client that s/ he was in control of the process, that the client did not manage the process, and that the process would not be shaped by the client's wishes. This indicates that the candidate is in control of the counselling process and that the process will still be under the candidate's control in further sessions.

The counsellor candidates were observed to have difficulty in determining the boundaries of the counselling process and identifying the problem properly. In the light of these findings, it may be concluded that the candidates need training in terms of this skill.

### Discussion and Result

Although Kuzgun (2000) stated that a more qualified and efficient psychological counselling should be provided in this field and that individual counselling training at undergraduate level is not suitable for this, individual counselling training is currently being given through the undergraduate program in Turkey. Meydan (2014) highlighted that an effective supervision model for psychological counselling candidates, who perform their first practices of psychological counselling training carried out at the undergraduate level, was required to focus on psychological counselling skills and to be structured and didactic. According to Özyürek (2009), in psychological counselling training, more attention was required to be given to the issue of supervision opportunities. Otherwise, the quality of psychological counselling and guidance services may not improve.

In fact, unlike Kuzgun (2000), the opinion that it is useful to continue the psychological counselling training as an undergraduate program is widely accepted; however, it was emphasized that certain programs that train psychological counsellors where students' practical experiences are inadequate needs to be restructured (Özgüven, 1990; Akkoyun, 1995; Doğan, 1996). Therefore, by taking into account the literature in psychological counselling field in Turkey, the current research whose purpose was to determine the training needs and qualification levels of counsellor candidates regarding "Structuring Dimension" in the process of psychological counselling was carried out in order to contribute to the field.

When the results regarding the sub-division of the ability to provide consistent information about the duration of structuring dimension in psychological counselling process were examined, it was observed that thirteen counsellor candidates were able to use this skill in the first session as expected. Although no negative practice concerning this skill was determined in other sessions, it was found that this skill was acquired in subsequent sessions. As a result, it may be concluded that there is no training need to gain this skill. In other words, there is no training need in terms of "the ability to provide consistent information about the duration of the psychological counselling process".

When the results concerning the sub-division of process of the structuring dimension in psychological counselling process were investigated, the counsellor candidates were observed to be unable to provide accurate information about the psychological counselling process in the first session. The counsellor candidates were found to make mistakes in using this skill. In light of the research findings, it was seen that candidates had difficulty in using "the ability to provide accurate information about the psychological counselling process" in the first session. In the second and third sessions, thanks to the interviews with the supervisor, it was seen that candidates' qualification levels increased and that there were no problems in other sessions that followed. Özgüven (1990) stated that the

practical experiences of psychological counselling were inadequate and that the programs which trained psychological counsellors were required to be restructured. The findings of this study are in accordance with the current study. The fact that the psychological counsellor candidates' experiences are increased and that they are provided the necessary feedback by a supervisor is crucial in terms of professional experience and development. In a study conducted by Aladağ (2014), as a result of the research in providing supervision given to the participants, it was revealed that one of the most influential and key findings in terms of students was the feedback provided by the supervisor. Although the counsellor candidate is required to give accurate information about the duration of the counselling process at the onset of the counselling, this skill may be repeated as a reminder when needed during the process. In addition, this skill can be explained, if necessary, when the client has different requests or attempts to manage or terminate the process.

Regarding the sub-division of the ability to explain the principles of psychological counselling process in the study, of all participants, six counsellor candidates were able to fulfil this skill as expected in the first session, whereas 14 candidates were observed to explain the principles and were found to make certain mistakes. Nevertheless, it was seen that the candidates reused the counselling principles and exhibited the necessary skill in the following sessions. Therefore, it was seen that there is no training need for the ability to explain the principles of psychological counselling process which is among structuring skills. Tanhan (2018) noted that, as one of the key points in the supervisory training process, the supervisors were required to support the counsellor candidates with positive, encouraging, and constructive feedback by paying attention to the developmental process of the candidates and that benefiting from the activities focusing on teaching by experience was a must in this feedback process.

The clients who have no experience in psychological help and psychological counselling process and the individuals who have psychological problems have false beliefs such as a 'magic wand' by the counsellor or an 'expectation of rapid recovery'. Depending on these beliefs, certain unrealistic expectations that adversely affect the reputation of psychological counsellors might be the result (Erkan et al., 2011). The ability to clarify the boundaries of the psychological counselling process is regarded as an important skill. Clarifying the boundaries of the counselling process may contribute to properly establishing the roles of the client and the counsellor. What is expected of the counsellor within the framework of the sub-division of the objective in the structuring dimension in psychological counselling process is to clarify the boundaries of the counselling process. Regarding the results of the sub-division of the objective of the structuring dimension in psychological counselling process, it was observed that the counsellor candidates had difficulty in determining the boundaries of the counselling process. Thanks to the supervision activities carried out at the end of the sessions, the candidates were found to be relatively able to acquire this skill; however, they were not able to gain this skill sufficiently. As a result, it can be concluded that the candidates had difficulty in determining the boundaries of the psychological counselling in the first session and in identifying the problem properly.

Akdoğan and Ceylan (2011) stated that one of the factors that lead to the deterioration of equality in the therapeutic process was the counsellor's need to set a limit between the counsellor and the client. For a therapeutic process to continue as expected and for the counsellor to fulfil his/ her roles, the counsellor is required to structure the process by determining the boundaries. Johnston (2001) noted that setting a limit between the counsellor and the client is a complication problem and that the counsellor could determine this, provided that the problem they attempted to figure out was clarified; although it was not easy. Consequently, this may be due to the fact that there are numerous factors that affect the development of therapeutic process. The boundaries may

vary in the underlying issue in each client and each counselling process; on the contrary, what is crucial is to determine the level of boundaries appropriately. In the current study, despite the supervision regarding the determination of boundaries of the counselling, it may be stated that one of the reasons the candidates had difficulty in using this skill as expected can be due to the fact that the candidates focus mainly on the completion of the process, make effort to end the session within the specified duration, and the fact that they lack professional experience.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the counsellor candidates need training in terms of the ability to clarify the boundaries of the psychological counselling process. Based on recommendation for further studies, micro teaching should be provided to help in determining the objective of psychological counselling process in the structuring dimension.

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.


This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.


## *Conflicts of interest.*

The authors of this paper certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; membership, employment; affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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