

Evaluating School Counselors' Self-efficacy Perceptions Regarding Special Education

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ABSTRACT School counselors are seen as one of the first persons to consult about special education in schools. Therefore, it is considered that school counselors need to be competent in the area of special education as well. In this research, it was aimed to evaluate the self-efficacy perception levels of school counselors regarding special education. The research was conducted based on relational descriptive research model. Population of the research was determined as school counselors. Researchers tried to reach the whole population, but that could not be carried out for some reasons. However, 68 school counselors in total participated in this research. The School Counselors' Self-Efficacy Scale regarding Special Education (SCSSSE) was used to collect the data for the research. According to the results, it was revealed that self-efficacy perception levels regarding special education among school counselors are not at an adequate level.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process facilitating certain developments and improvements in the thoughts, attitudes, behaviors and lives of individuals through predetermined aims (Barutcuoglu 2002). Education is beyond everything as a system configuration. Teacher competencies play an important role in the progression of this system (Yazcayir and Selvi 2014). When the concept of "efficacy" is considered from the perspective of teachers, it includes knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are necessary for achieving the duties and responsibilities of teaching (Okursoy 2016). "Education process beginning from birth continues from primary school in a systematic and planned way. Since primary and secondary school are the basis of other education systems, knowledge, skills and attitudes in which students will gain should be provided by teachers who are competent in their fields" (Sadioglu and Oksal 2008). When it is considered from human rights perspective, all individuals have the right to receive education, benefit from education and equality of opportunity in education.

In contemporary societies, education is not only protected by individuals, it is also protected by law and institutions (Cotuksoken 2003). According to the 42nd article of Republic of Turkey (TR) Constitution, it is stated, "No one could be deprived of the right to receive education. Individuals who could not benefit from normal education opportunities without adaptations based on their individual differences also have the freedom of education and instruction as all citizens of Republic of Turkey." Besides, education rights of individuals with special needs has been guaranteed based on the expression in the Constitution stating that "the government take precautions for individuals who need special education in a way that they could be beneficial for the society." Nevertheless, children with disability cannot benefit from their rights in some societies, children with disability experience social stigmatization in some societies and their rights are ignored as well.

Equality in education is mentioned in the basic principles of North Cyprus National Education. In other words, every citizen has the right to receive education and instruction without any discrimination. Raising individuals with special needs as an individual is beneficial for the society and providing a healthy, balanced and strong personality to them are the basic principles of national education (North Cyprus National Education Law 1986). Therefore, right to education is also a basic right of an individual with special needs as all other individuals in the society. Individuals with special needs should also be

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raised as an individual beneficial for the society. According to Decree-Law No. 573 on Special Education (1997), for individuals who need special education and Special Education Services Regulation (2006), special education services include environment, education, developed programs based on individual differences in order to meet educational requirements and specially trained staff.

Ataman (2009) defined special education as education provided to children with special needs, preventing inability to transform into disability, facilitating gifted individuals to increase their capacity to the highest level based on their talents, supporting individuals with disability to become self-sufficient and prepare them to integrate into society and become independent, productive individuals through gaining them necessary skills. According to Akcamete (1997), special education is a part of the education system ensuring equality of opportunity in education by providing appropriate education to individuals who need special education and could not meet the requirements of normal education.

Educational regulations in special education are conducted based on individual characteristics. According to the Special Education Services Regulation in Turkey, students with special needs receive education in a less restricted environment through most restricted environment with their peers without disability such as general education class, special education class, special education school/institution and boarding special education school/institution (MEB 2004).

There is more improvement with teamwork when special education methods in the education process of individuals with special needs are used. There is a medical doctor, psychologist, physiotherapist, special education expert, special education teacher, child development specialist, psychological counselor, school counselor, social worker, classroom teacher, branch teacher (music, art, physics education, drama), speech and language therapist, audiologist, dietician, nurse, educational audiologist and other related staff in a special education team (Baykoc 2011). Students with special needs and their families also are a part of this team (Gursel 2007). Teamwork is really important in special education. Experiences in special education showed that appropriate education was achieved with teamwork rather than individual

efforts. Characteristics of every individual with special needs vary. Therefore, experts and families need to work cooperatively in order to meet the requirements of individuals with special needs (Diken 2010; Banes et al. 2015).

In Special Education Services Regulation of Turkey (MEB 2006), it is stated that teamwork includes screening, diagnosis, placement, preparation of educational programs, monitoring the developments of children with special needs and providing additional support services for them to benefit from normal education requirements in the best way and taking necessary precautions. Nevertheless, it is also indicated that guidance and psychological counseling for students receiving mainstreaming education, which is the less restricted education environment must be provided by school counselors. Definition of students who are at risk is also provided in the regulation and these students are also included in special education services. There are students who are at risk in the school environment as students with special needs. These students might experience academic incompetence, school failure and adaptation problems (Werts et al. 2007).

When legal regulations for the prevention of problems are examined, knowledge related with how, where, and how long will be the education of students with special needs and who will give this education are specified. In this context, school counselors play a great role in the integration of students with special needs to the society and helping them live independently (Kola 2012; Ichim et al. 2015).

According to Kepceoglu (1992), counseling is the helping process to an individual psychologically. Counseling is not leading, preaching or providing information. Willingness and voluntariness constitute the basis of the relationship between the client and counselor in the counseling process. School counselor is defined as personnel who received education on psychological counseling, guidance and psychological services in education at universities and provide guidance and psychological counseling to students in education institutions and guidance and research centers (MEB 2006). Importance of school counselors in contemporary education system has increased recently (Yuksel et al. 2012). It is really important in education environments for the school counselor and classroom teacher to work cooperatively to

identify the needs of students (Ekizoglu and Uzunboylu 2009).

School counselors in North Cyprus must provide necessary psychological counseling and guidance services to families and students if there is a student with special needs in the school or mainstreaming education and work cooperatively with ministry of education (North Cyprus National Education Law 1986). In addition, it is observed that school counselors experience difficulties in performing their responsibilities stated in legislation in practice.

When related research in the literature is examined, Kuyumcu (2011) conducted a qualitative study with 10 classroom teachers and 5 school counselors working at primary schools, which also provide mainstreaming education in order to determine their problems in the process of preparing and applying Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and their recommendations for solving these problems. According to the results, it was revealed that classroom teachers mostly detected the performance level of the student and school counselors mostly identified the goals and objectives of IEP. It was also figured out that classroom teachers and school counselors experienced difficulties in evaluating student performances, writing goals and objectives, working together with families, planning and applying support services and teaching practices, accessing related resources and evaluating the goals and acceptance of the student within class.

According to the literature, it is seen that there is a relationship between self-efficacy perceptions of teachers and the quality of the service provided by them. It is seen that teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs try to constitute a student-centered approach through helping students to make sense of knowledge in the classrooms. It was revealed that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are related with class management skills, preferences on teaching methods-techniques selected for students and effort levels spent for students' achievement (Gurol et al. 2010). Nevertheless, many research showed that programs on acquiring counseling skills for school counselors positively affect their self-efficacy perceptions (Liaw 2009; Kucuker et al. 2002; Sharpley and Ridgway 1993). As it can be seen, studies in the literature revealed the result that self-efficacy perception of teachers positively affected their teaching performances. When

teachers have sufficient information and follow current trends in their fields, they would feel more competent to provide accurate information and service to families and students (Tugun and Ozdamli 2015; Ersan 2015). Roles and functions of school counselors were not clearly identified in the past (Bridgeland and Bruce 2014). In addition, these findings show the importance of positive self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors when they perform their responsibilities related with special education for the quality of special education services.

According to Bandura (1999), real experiences, indirect experiences, social persuasion and psychological situations are effective in the constitution of self-efficacy perception. In this context, it is known that self-efficacy perception affect achievement, expectations, targets, preferences, motivation and effort. School counselors could be expected to have higher levels of self-efficacy perception when performing their duties, roles and responsibilities identified in legal regulations. It is very important for school counselors to perceive themselves as professionally effective (Aliyev and Tunc 2015).

When teachers' self-efficacies are considered within the scope of special education, special education teachers with high self-efficacy are expected to provide better services for students with special needs, take the control of the situation in the class and meet the educational needs of their students in class instead of redirecting them to guidance and psychological service (Meijer and Foster 1988). In addition, teachers and school counselors need to be aware of ethical considerations (Cerkez 2014). Special education teachers with low self-efficacy tend to choose the easy way and redirect their students to guidance and psychological service instead of showing the necessary effort because of their insufficient level of self-confidence (Soodak and Podell 1993). For this reason, self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors related with problems of students with special needs is an important variable for the process as their knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences (Aksoy and Diken 2009). It is considered that school counselors need to have a strong self-efficacy belief in order to provide qualified guidance services in special education, which is regarded as a complementary component of education and educational aims.

It is seen that teachers and school counselors encounter many difficulties when performing their duties related with special education and thus they cannot perform their duties at the expected level. Therefore, the aims of this research are to reveal the difficulties of school counselors when performing their duties and determine the problems. It is expected that determining the self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education among school counselors will lead to studies on increasing their job efficiency through revealing their requirements in performing their role and responsibilities in education institutions. Based on the abovementioned reasons, this study examined the school counselors' self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education working at state and private schools in North Cyprus.

Aim of the Research

This study aimed to examine self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education of school counselors working at state and private schools.

Sub-aims

In line with the general aim of the study, sub-aims are identified and the answers to following questions were sought in this study:

1. What is the distribution of school counselors' ratings on statements of School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale regarding Special Education (SCSSSE)?
2. Do school counselors' self-efficacy perceptions vary based on their educational level?
3. Do school counselors' self-efficacy perceptions vary based on their in-service training status?
4. Is there a significant relationship between school counselors' working years and self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education?
5. Do school counselors' self-efficacy perceptions vary based on whether they studied with students with special needs or not?
6. Do school counselors' self-efficacy perceptions vary based on the grade level they work with?

METHODOLOGY

The research model, population and sample, data collection tool, data collection process and data analysis of the research are explained in this section.

Research Model

Relational descriptive model was used in the research. The relation of self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors with various variables was examined.

Study Group

School counselors working at state and private schools in North Cyprus constituted the population of the research. There were 80 school counselors working at North Cyprus private schools.

The researchers tried to reach the whole population since the number of school counselors in the whole population is not so high. In the data collection process, 60 school counselors from state schools and 8 school counselors from private schools returned the researchers and filled the questionnaire. Therefore, 68 school counselors in total, participated in this research. 63 of the school counselors were female and 5 of them were male. The ages of school counselors were between 21 and 40 years. Demographic information about school counselors is provided with numbers and percentages in the results section.

Data Collection Tool

Since the aim of the research is to evaluate self-efficacies of school counselors regarding special education, School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale regarding Special Education (SCSSSE) was used to collect the data of the research. The scale was developed by Aksoy and Diken (2009) wherein the reliability and validity studies of the scale were conducted. The Demographic Information Form developed by the researchers was also used in the research.

The scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 40 statements. In the scale, school counselors are asked to indicate their opinions related with each statement on their self-efficacy.

cies through marking these alternatives, that is, (1) "Strongly Disagree", (2) "Disagree", (3) "Undecided", (4) "Agree" and (5) "Strongly Agree."

In order to evaluate the content validity of the scale, expert views were obtained and factor analysis was conducted to ensure construct validity. The test-retest method was used in order to test the reliability of the scale. The reliability and validity studies showed that the scale includes 40 statements and it measures the construct with a single dimension. The lowest score, which can be received from the scale, is 40 and the highest score is 200. Higher scores received from the scale refer to higher levels of self-efficacies regarding psychological counseling and guidance in special education among school counselors.

Aksoy and Diken (2009) calculated the test-retest reliability (r) of the scale as 0.96 and Cronbach alpha value was obtained as 0.98. It was revealed that psychometric properties of the scale are appropriate to measure the self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors regarding special education and the scale is reliable and valid as well (Aksoy and Diken 2009).

Data Collection

Permissions were obtained from the researchers who developed the "School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale regarding Special Education (SCSSSE)" to use the scale in the present research and Secondary Education Department of Northern Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture to collect data from the schools. Different dates for every school were determined in order to conduct the study after getting the necessary permissions. Researchers went to the schools for application on the determined dates and data collection tools were administered to the school counselors. Participants were informed about the aims of the study and the importance of giving sincere responses to the scale was also explained to them.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the research was analyzed with appropriate statistical methods based on expert views. Data obtained from the "School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale regarding Special Education (SCSSSE)" was analyzed with SPSS package program. The results were explained and interpreted in tables.

The first question of the research was answered through descriptive statistics. The Mann Whitney U Test was used to answer the second, third and fifth research questions. Spearman Brown Difference Between Ranks Correlational Coefficient was used to answer the fourth research question. In the interpretation of statistical tests, statistical significance level was regarded as .05.

RESULTS

Results and analysis based on research questions are provided in this section.

Results on the Ranking Distributions of School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale's Statements

Results related with the ranking distributions of statements in the School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale are demonstrated in Table 1.

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that teachers mostly responded as strongly disagree, disagree and undecided especially to statement numbers 2, 3, 28 and 40.

Results on School Counselors' Self-efficacy Perceptions Regarding Special Education According to Their Educational Level

Since school counselors' scores did not show normal distribution, the Mann Whitney U Test was used to determine if their self-efficacy perceptions differ based on their educational level (Table 2).

The Mann Whitney U Test results showed that school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education do not differ according to their educational level ($U=34$, $p=.084$).

Results on School Counselors' Self-efficacy Perceptions Regarding Special Education Based on Whether They Received In-service Training or Not

Since school counselors' scores did not show normal distribution, Mann Whitney U Test was used to determine if their self-efficacy perceptions differ based on whether they received in-service training or not (Table 3).

Mann Whitney U Test results showed that school counselors' scores on self-efficacy per-

Table 1: Ranking distributions of school counselors' responses to the statements

S. No.	Statements	Strongly	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	 X	Mean	SD
		F- %	F- %	F- %	F- %	F- %			
1	I have sufficient knowledge and skills related with individual guidance services for students with special needs to support their personal developments.	18- 26.5	10- 14.7	6- 8.8	15- 22.1	19- 27.9	3 .	3.5	1.6
2	I think I (can) realize various problems of students with special needs that are not directly related with their disabilities.	15- 22.1	4- 5.9	9- 13.2	17- 25.0	23- 33.8	3 4 3	4	1.55
3	I have the ability to provide individual guidance services for students with special needs to overcome emotional and cognitive difficulties in the period of adolescence.	14- 20.6	8- 11.8	4- 5.9	16- 23.5	26- 38.2	3 4 7	4	1.59
4	I know the experts, professionals or institutions that I can redirect students with special needs when I can not handle with.	13- 19.1	12- 17.6	1- 1.5	23- 33.8	19- 27.9	3 . 3 3	4	1.52
5	I can provide sufficient level of support to students with special needs for their social and emotional development.	24- 35.3	1- 1.5	6- 8.8	23- 33.8	14- 20.6	3 . 0 2	4	1.62
6	I know how to handle with problem behaviors displayed by students with special needs.	20- 29.4	5- 7.4	3- 4.4	9- 13.2	31- 45.6	3 . 3 8	4	1.76
7	I can help students with special needs to gain necessary social, emotional and cognitive skills at a minimum level in in-group interaction and cooperation.	19- 27.9	0- 0	10- 14.7	14- 20.6	25- 36.8	3 . 3 8	4	1.64
8	I can provide guidance services to families of students with special needs to support social, emotional and cognitive developments of their children.	9- 13.2	17- 25	3- 4.4	13- 19.1	26- 38.2	3 . 4 4	4	1.53
9	I can be facilitative for students with special needs to establish relationship between opposite sex in a desired way and their emotinal problems about this issue	17- 25	4- 5.9	6- 8.8	16- 23.5	25- 36.8	3 . 4 1	4	1.62
10	I have knowledge about gaining appropriate behaviors to students with special needs.	10- 14.7	15- 22.1	1- 1.5	23- 33.8	19- 27.9	3 . 3	4	1.47
11	I have sufficient amount of knowledge related with the methods which might increase the awareness levels of students with special needs about their individual characteristics and strong and weak aspects.	13- 19.1	12- 17.6	3- 4.4	3- 4.4	37- 54.4	3 . 5 7	5	1.69

Table 1: Contd...

S. No.	Statements	Strongly	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	\bar{X}	Mean	SD
		F- %	F- %	F- %	F- %	F- %			
12	I can provide current information to students with special needs and their families about professions based on the student's characteristics and how to acquire that profession.	20- 29.4	5- 7.4	4- 5.9	5- 7.4	34- 50	3 .4 1	4.5	1.79
13	I have knowledge related with guiding students with special needs on how they can acquire professions appropriate for their individual characteristics.	15- 22.1	7- 10.3	4- 5.9	12- 17.6	30- 44.1	3 .5 1	4.0	1.64
14	I can redirect students with special needs to many professions appropriate for the severity of their disabilities.	24- 35.3	1- 1.5	0-	13 -19.1	30- 44.1	3 .3 5	4.0	1.81
15	I know individual recognition technics appropriate for the characteristics of students with special needs.	21- 30.9	1- 1.5	4- 5.9	20- 29.4	22- 32.4	3 .3 0	4.0	1.67
16	I have skills to apply individual recognition technics appropriate for the characteristics of students with special needs.	24- 25.3	0-	1- 1.5	19- 27.9	24- 35.3	3 .2 8	4.0	1.78
17	I know my duty and responsibilities as a school counselor in identifying students with special needs.	19- 27.3 0	5- 7.4	3- 4.4	5- 7.4	36- 52.9	3 .5	5.0	1.78
18	I can increase the success of mainstreaming practices through my studies in school guidance service.	14- 20.6	8- 11.8	5- 7.4	24- 35.3	17- 25.0	3 .3 2	4.0	1.49
19	I know people and institutions that I need to collaborate with in order to meet the requirements of students with special needs.	21- 30.9	4- 5.9	0-	7- 10.3	36- 52.9	3 .4 8	5.0	1.82
20	I can give education to school personnel, teachers and school administration about mainstreaming practices.	21- 30.9	0-	8- 11.8	20- 29.4	19- 27.9	3 .2 3	4.0	1.62
21	I have sufficient amount of information related with my responsibilities in preparing Individualized Education Programs (IEP).	12- 17.6	8- 11.8	4- 5.9	10- 14.7	31- 45.6	3 .6 1	4.0	1.60
22	I know that there are legal and ethical rules which I have to obey when providing guidance services to students with special needs and their families.	21- 30.9	1- 1.5	2- 2.9	21- 30.9	23- 33.8	3 .3 5	4.0	1.68
23	I can decide on what are the support services that students with special needs would require based on my evaluation.	22- 32.4	3- 4.4	3- 4.4	2- 2.9	38- 55.9	3 .4 5	5.0	1.85

Table 1: Contd...

S. No.	Statements	Strongly	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	X̄	Mean	SD
		F-%	F-%	F-%	F-%	F-%			
24	I know how to prepare "Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)" for the families of students with special needs.	21-30.9	1-1.5	3-4.4	19-27.9	24-35.3	3.35	4.0	1.69
25	I have necessary training and equipment on how to prepare forms for evaluating individual development of students with special needs.	16-23.5	8-11.8	1-1.5	4-5.9	39-57.4	3.62	5.0	1.75
26	I know how to access information that I need to learn about special education.	15-22.1	10-14.7	0-	10-14.7	33-48.5	3.5	4.0	1.69
27	I have sufficient level of knowledge about legal regulations related with special education.	20-29.4	1-1.5	4-5.9	17-25.0	26-38.2	3.4	4.0	1.68
28	I know how to prepare "individual development reports" of students with special needs.	17-25.0	1-1.5	10-14.7	20-29.4	20-29.4	3.3	4.0	1.54
29	I believe that I have an important role in screening studies which would be conducted to identify students with special needs.	19-27.9	10-14.7	2-2.9	7-10.3	30-44.1	3.27	4.0	1.76
30	I know the commissions which I need to take place in meeting the requirements of students with special needs.	21-30.9	4-5.9	8-11.8	21-30.9	14-20.6	3.4	4.0	1.56
31	I have necessary knowledge on helping students with special needs to develop their effective learning and study skills.	18-26.5	6-8.8	3-4.4	18-26.5	23-33.8	3.32	4.0	1.64
32	I know what to do about redirecting students with special needs to higher education institutions appropriate for their individual characteristics.	20-29.4	6-8.8	8-11.8	5-7.4	29-42.6	3.25	3.5	1.73
33	I have sufficient amount of knowledge and equipment for teachers to help them to suggest educational and instructional technics and gain competence for students with special needs.	21-30.9	5-7.4	10-14.7	7-10.3	25-36.8	3.14	3.0	1.70
34	I have sufficient amount of knowledge and equipment to support and increase the motivations of students with special needs.	21-30.9	4-5.9	1-1.5	24-35.3	18-26.5	3.20	4.0	1.64
35	I know methods for students with special needs appropriate for their competencies that can direct and familiarize them with schools, branches in the school, various activities and new situations.	17-25.0	5-7.4	4-5.9	27-39.7	15-22.1	3.26	4.0	1.52
36	I can integrate students with special needs into group counseling activities through conducting necessary regulations.	15-22.1	5-7.4	17-25.0	10-14.7	21-30.9	3.25	3.0	1.51

Table 1: Contd...

S. No.	Statements	Strongly	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	\bar{X}	Mean	SD
		F-%	F-%	F-%	F-%	F-%			
37	I can give necessary training to the families of children with typical development about mainstreaming practices in which there are students with special needs continuing mainstreaming education in the same class with their peers.	17-25.0	7-10.3	4-5.9	19-27.9	21-30.9	3.29	4.0	1.60
38	I (can) use positive personality or personal characteristics of students with special needs in the process of in-group interaction and relationship in the favor of them.	15-22.1	7-10.3	10-14.7	8-11.8	28-41.2	3.39	4.0	1.62
40	I can guide teachers in teaching and education process of students receiving mainstreaming education.	4-5.9	12-17.6	11-16.2	28-41.2	13-19.1	3.5	4.0	1.16

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education according to their educational level

Educational level	n	\bar{X}	Median	SD	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S
Graduate Degree	49	3.07	4	1.61	1	5	-.16	-1.87	.23
Postgraduate Degree	19	4.09	4.43	1.03	1.12	4.8	-2.49	5.44	.33
									p=.000

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education based on whether they received in-service training or not

In-service training received or not	n	\bar{X}	Median	SD	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S
Yes	36	4.33	4.56	.77	1.30	5	-2.61	7.31	.25
No	32	2.25	1.45	1.43	1	4.6	.76	-1.34	.27
									p=.000

ceptions regarding special education differed based on whether they received in-service training before or not ($u=123.5, p=.000$). When mean ranks of groups are examined, mean ranks of school counselors who received in-service training before (47.07) are higher than those of school counselors who did not receive in-service training before (20.36). Therefore, it could be indicated that self-efficacy perceptions of teachers who received in-service training before are more positive.

Results on the Relationship Between School Counselors' Scores on Self-efficacy Perceptions Regarding Special Education and Their Working Years

Relationship between school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education and their working years was examined based on Spearman Brown Difference Between Ranks Correlational Coefficient. Results revealed that there is a negative, significant and

low level of relationship between school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education and their working years ($r = -.32, p = .007$). These results showed that when working years increase, teachers' self-efficacy perceptions become more negative.

Results on School Counselors' Self-efficacy Perceptions Regarding Special Education According to Grade Level That They Are Working With

Since school counselors' scores did not show normal distribution, Mann Whitney U Test was used to determine if their self-efficacy perceptions differ based on the grade level that they are working with (Table 4).

Mann Whitney U Test results showed that school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education differed based on the grade level that they were working with ($U = 504.0, p = .37$). When mean ranks of groups are examined, it is seen that mean ranks of school counselors working at secondary schools (36.73) are higher than those of school counselors working at high schools (32.40). Therefore, it could be indicated that self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors working at secondary schools are more positive than school counselors working at high schools.

Results on School Counselors' Self-efficacy Perceptions Regarding Special Education Based on Whether They Worked with Students with Special Needs Before or Not

Since school counselors' scores did not show normal distribution, Mann Whitney U Test was used to determine if their self-efficacy perceptions differ based on whether they worked with students with special needs before or not (Table 5).

Mann Whitney U Test results showed that school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education differed based on whether they worked with students with special needs before or not ($U = 148.50, p = .00$). When mean rank of groups are examined, it is seen that mean ranks of school counselors who worked with students with special needs before (45.19) are higher than mean scores of school counselors who did not work with students with special needs before (20.12). Therefore, it could be indicated that self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors who worked with students with special needs before are more positive when compared to school counselors who did not work with students with special needs before.

DISCUSSION

In this research, it is aimed to evaluate the school counselors' self-efficacy perception lev-

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education based on the grade level that they are working with

	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>K-S</i>
Secondary School	33	3.58	4.32	.25	1.08	5.0	-.93	-.88	.28 <i>p</i> = .000
High School	35	3.14	4.12	.27	1.0	5.0	-.28	-1.89	.26 <i>p</i> = .000

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of school counselors' scores on self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education based on whether they worked with students with special needs before or not

<i>School counselors' status on whether they worked with students with special needs before or not</i>	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>K-S</i>
Yes	39	4.35	4.55	.94	1.05	4.80	-2.76	7.17	.29 <i>p</i> = .000
No	29	2.14	1.40	1.33	1.0	4.80	1.03	-.63	.25 <i>p</i> = .000

els regarding special education. The School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale regarding Special Education (SCSSSE) developed by Aksoy and Diken (2009) was used to collect the data of the research.

When responses of school counselors to the "School Counselors' Self-efficacy Scale regarding Special Education" are examined, it is seen that there is a similar distribution among "strongly disagree" and "disagree", which refers to negative perception and "strongly agree" and "agree", which refers to positive perception. Nevertheless, it was revealed that school counselors mostly give negative responses to these statements of (2) "I think I (can) realize various problems of students with special needs that are not directly related with their disabilities", (7) "I can help students with special needs to gain necessary social, emotional and cognitive skills at a minimum level in in-group interaction and cooperation", (28) "I know how to prepare "individual development reports" of students with special needs", and (40) "I can guide teachers in the teaching and education process of students continuing mainstreaming education". The number of school counselors who gave responses as "undecided" to these statements is close to 10 as well.

Overall results indicated that school counselors participated in this research mostly reported that they did not perceive themselves as competent or they did not have any idea about identifying the problems of students with special needs, providing them social, emotional and cognitive skills, preparing individual development reports and providing guidance to classroom teachers about mainstreaming practices.

Nevertheless, research in the literature shows that school counselors experience difficulties in special education practices (Kuyumcu 2011). It is determined that positive self-efficacy perceptions among school counselors positively affect their teaching skills. Teachers with positive self-efficacy perceptions try to constitute a student-centered approach in their classrooms by allowing their students to make sense of knowledge. It has been also revealed that self-efficacy beliefs of teachers were related with their class management skills, teaching method-technics preferences and effort levels for their students to be successful (Gurol et al. 2010).

There are studies in the literature showing that programs for school counselors to acquire

counseling skills positively affect their self-efficacy perceptions (Liaw 2009; Kucuker et al. 2002; Sharpley and Ridgway 1993). These results reveal the importance of acquiring knowledge and skills related with special education to school counselors. As it is shown in the literature, when teachers acquire knowledge and skills related with the field, their self-efficacy perceptions also change in a positive way. This would help school counselors perform their responsibilities in a healthy and effective way in terms of special education practices.

School counselors in North Cyprus must provide necessary psychological counseling and guidance services to families and students if there is a student with special needs in the school or mainstreaming education and work cooperatively with ministry of education (North Cyprus National Education Law 1986). This study showed that school counselors participated in this research mostly reported that they need support in identifying the problems of students with special needs, helping them gain social, emotional and cognitive skills, preparing individual development report and providing guidance to classroom teachers about mainstreaming practices. Therefore, it is seen as essential to provide in-service training about these issues to school counselors and give importance to acquiring knowledge and skills about these issues in graduate, postgraduate programs at universities and review the lecture contents of programs according to this perspective. As Kutlu and Gurpinar (2015) indicated, in-service training is important for school counselors to improve themselves.

When the relationship between self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors and different variables is examined, it is seen that when working years of school counselors' increase, their self-efficacy perceptions become more negative. Aksoy and Diken (2009) figured out similar results as well. It is an expected situation that when working years of school counselors' increase, they become more aware about problems and requirements. On the other hand, no significant difference was observed between working years and self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors. The results also revealed that self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors did not differ based on their educational level. This shows the necessity of providing knowledge and practices related with special education in postgraduate programs as well.

Furthermore, results showed that school counselors who received in-service training before have higher self-efficacy perceptions. Many studies indicated that programs on acquiring counseling skills for school counselors positively affected their self-efficacy perceptions (Liaw 2009; Kucuker et al. 2002; Sharpley and Ridgway 1993). Nevertheless, knowledge and skills are not only acquired through training before or during the provided service. Teaching experiences with students also contribute positively to knowledge and skills of school counselors. In this study, it was revealed that counselors who worked with students with special needs before have more positive self-efficacy perceptions regarding special education.

According to the results of this study, self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors working at secondary schools are more positive. On the other hand, Kaner (2010) found that self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors do not change based on the grade level that they are working with. It is difficult to make an interpretation about this issue. In order to make an interpretation about the relationship between self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors and the grade level that they are working with, different variables should also be examined.

This study emphasized the importance of high level of self-efficacy perceptions among school counselors to be more effective in helping students with special needs. In addition, it is also necessary to support school counselors for helping students with special needs in terms of knowledge and skills both before and during their professional life (Kan 2015). Similarly, since working with students with special needs positively affect self-efficacy perceptions, providing opportunities for school counselors to practice with these students both during their university education and professional life are necessary. Therefore, school counselors would be more confident to perform their responsibilities related with special education in a healthy and effective way.

CONCLUSION

Following results have been obtained from this research:

1. School counselors mostly reported that they did not perceive themselves as competent or they did not have any idea about identifying the problems of students with

special needs, helping them gain social, emotional and cognitive skills, preparing individual development reports and providing guidance to classroom teachers about mainstreaming practices.

2. When working years increase, school counselors' self-efficacy perceptions become more negative.
3. Self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors do not differ based on their educational level.
4. School counselors who received in-service training related with special education have higher self-efficacy perceptions.
5. School counselors who worked with students with special needs before have more positive self-efficacy perceptions.
6. School counselors working with secondary school have more positive self-efficacy perceptions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following recommendations have been developed based on the results of the research:

1. Seminars and in-service training courses related with special education for school counselors may be organized.
2. Number of courses related with special education in Guidance and Psychological Counseling graduate programs may be increased.
3. Self-efficacy perceptions of school counselors working at different educational environments (special education institutions, primary education, secondary education) may be examined.
4. Research may be conducted to figure out the problems of school counselors related with special education working at primary education.
5. Special education practices may be included in school experience courses of Guidance and Psychological Counseling graduate programs.

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