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AN INVESTIGATION OF JOB AND CAREER COUNSELING CANDIDATES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT¹

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Abstract

In this current study we are examining individuals who are trained for job and career counseling in terms of their 'attitudes towards diversity' 'empathy skills' and 'potential for diversity management performance'. In this respect, the relationship between the 'attitudes towards diversity' and 'empathy skills' of career counselors, who will be working in the personnel selection and placement process, will be investigated. Furthermore, the impact of 'attitudes towards diversity' and 'empathy skills' on 'potential for diversity management performance' will be studied. The differentiating effect of gender on 'empathy skills' of individuals who are trained for job and career counseling will also be covered in the research context.

The research is conducted on 266 future job and career counselors. Results reveals a positive relationship between 'potential for diversity management performance' and 'empathy skills' as well as between 'attitudes towards diversity' and 'empathy skills' of trained counselors. Furthermore, results points out that 'empathy skills' and 'attitudes towards diversity' significantly predicts 'potential for diversity management performance'. Additionally a significant gender difference is found to exist in terms of 'empathy skills' of individuals.

Keywords: *Diversity, Diversity Management, Diversity Management Performance, Empathy Skills, Job and Career Counselors, Job and Career Counseling.*

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İŞ VE MESLEK DANIŞMANLIĞI ADAYLARININ FARKLILIK YÖNETİMİ PERSPEKTİFİNDEN İNCELENMESİ²

Öz

Çalışmada, iş ve meslek danışmanlığı eğitimi almış kişilerin, işgücündeki farklılıklara ilişkin tutumları, empati becerileri ve farklılıkların yönetimine yönelik potansiyel performansları araştırılmaktadır. Personel seçimi ve yerleştirilmesi ile kariyer danışmanlığı süreçlerinde çalışacak bireylerin, farklılıklara ilişkin tutumları ile empati becerileri arasında ilişki olup olmadığı ve farklılıklara yönelik tutumları ile empati becerilerinin, farklılıkların yönetimine yönelik potansiyel performanslarını etkileyip etkilemediği bu doğrultuda incelenmektedir. İş ve meslek danışmanlığı eğitimi almış kişilerin empati becerilerinin, cinsiyet değişkenine göre farklılık gösterip göstermediği de araştırma kapsamında ele alınmaktadır.

Araştırma, gelecekte iş ve meslek danışmanı olacak 266 kişi üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda, eğitim almış kişilerin empati becerileri ile farklılıkların yönetimine yönelik potansiyel performansları arasında ve farklılıklara yönelik tutumları ile empati becerileri arasında pozitif yönde ilişki bulunmuştur. Ayrıca bu kişilerin empati becerileri ve farklılıklara yönelik tutumlarının, farklılıkların yönetimine yönelik potansiyel performanslarının açıklayıcısı olduğu görülmüştür. Bunun yanı sıra cinsiyet değişkeni açısından bireylerin, empati becerileri arasında farklılık olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Farklılıklar, Farklılıkların Yönetimi, Farklılıkların Yönetimi Performansı, Empati Becerileri, İş ve Meslek Danışmanları, İş ve Meslek Danışmanlığı.

INTRODUCTION

The strategic importance of human resource management has been recognized in Turkey earlier by the private sector around the late 1980s whereas relatively recently in the public sector around 2000s. Even though private and public bodies nowadays have accelerated in devoting efforts to leverage the human capital, the great majority of interest has been on the benefits of shareholders and efficiency of organizations. An employee perspective has rather been disregarded. Due to the typical conjuncture of a developing country with a relatively large and young population, companies and human resources experts have regrettably had the freedom of choice among extreme numbers of applicants who are even over-qualified for open-positions. Predominantly, the importance of the psychological and social aspects of person-organization fit has not been taken into consideration sufficiently from an employee standpoint. In the case of Turkey where there is an ongoing demand and supply imbalance of workforce, job and career counseling stand out to play exceptionally a consequential role in guiding and supporting individuals all through their career paths.

² Bu çalışmanın bir önceki versiyonu, 3. Uluslararası İşletme ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Konferansı'nda (12-13 Mart 2012, Conference Master Resources, Bandung, Endonezya) bildiri olarak sunulmuştur.

Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, career information guidance and counseling services got the debate and consideration it deserves very lately. Job and career counseling services are being carried out in Turkey through integrated efforts of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and its affiliated institution Turkish Employment Organization (İŞKUR), of Ministry of National Education, of universities, trade unions, private sector, and of employer associations (Akkök and Watts, 2003: 9). Among these cooperating units, Turkish Employment Organization constitutes the focus of this research further to its recent reorganization attempts.

The major responsibilities of İŞKUR are making national policy in order to improve employment conditions and to prevent unemployment; providing career information guidance and counseling services to students, to job seekers and to employers; collecting, analyzing, interpreting data, and disseminating information about labor force market both in local and national contexts; analyzing labor force demand and supply; conducting career and vocational analysis; developing and implementing vocational training programs either employment-guaranteed or not; training and developing the currently employed workforce; implementing passive labor force programs; coordinating unemployment insurance services; regulating employment processes both in terms of employees and employers; regulating private employment agencies; reviewing and following up the legal arrangements and new agreements in an international extent including European Union institutions and making the adjustments and integration attempts when necessary (Law of Turkish Employment Organization, Act No. 4904, 2003).

In parallel with the above mentioned responsibilities of the organization and in accordance with its mission, some promising interventions and practices, even if not perfect enough, are being carried out under the structure of Turkish Employment Organization, in order to construct human resources strategies specific to Turkey, to develop employment policies and to integrate the current employment policies with European Union social policy. The most recent development about the institution is the fundamental change process that has taken a start in 2011 due to new legal arrangements in the related law and in some of the relevant decrees.

In accordance with the decree having the force of Law (Act No.665, put into effect after its publication in the Official Gazette, dated 02.11.2011) on modifying the Law and some decrees having the force of law on the organization and functions of Ministry of Labor and Social Security, an extensive reorganization is being implemented, covering all units for a better coordination between representatives in the center offices and the provinces (İŞKUR, 2011a: 32). The redevelopment is encompassing the process improvement as well. In this context, a new position in the structure of the Turkish Employment Organization is announced to have been created first time in the history of the organization. The position was created in order to generate full employment positions for educated

and qualified unemployed population. The declared number in the press to be employed during the first recruitment process was two thousand as stated in the official journal published by Turkish Employment Organization (İŞKUR, 2011b: 68). There was no consensus in other media reports and the number was fluctuating between one thousand and four thousand. The two major prerequisites of the promised new position were: being unemployed and successfully completing the Job and Career Counseling Training Program designed and implemented by the Turkish Employment Organization in coordination with agreed universities in all over Turkey.

The Job and Career Counseling Training Program included courses designed to provide the necessary theoretical background and practical adequacy for participants to work as job and career counselors. The job description and job specifications for job and career counseling, legal aspects of job and career counseling, basic principles of and main processes in job and career counseling, labor market and its dynamics, organizations responsible for employment issues, vocational information sources, basics of laws and regulations on employment, basics of job health and safety, education system in Turkey, basics of laws and regulations on environmental issues, quality management system, foundations of human resource management, personnel need analysis, recruitment process, training and development need analysis, career management, public relations and cooperation activities, the human and the psychology of unemployed, effective interviewing, basic analysis techniques, basics of measurement and evaluation, alternative tools for data gathering, techniques for job seeking, characteristics of an attractive curriculum vitae, techniques of problem solving and decision making, entrepreneurship, disadvantageous groups, job and career counseling for disadvantageous groups, body language, impression management, presentation techniques and practices, time management, planning techniques, effective professional visits to educational institutions, effective professional visits to organizations, and reporting constituted the basic courses in the structure of the training program (Atay et al., 2011). The variety of courses aimed at training and empowering the participants so as to gain the capability of overcoming a wide range of activities on the job when they start working as job and career counselors.

Indeed job and career counseling necessitates the coordination of a broad range of skills, abilities, and knowledge. Job and career counselors provide services to a diversified group of individuals some of whom are employed, some are unemployed, and some are students or future candidates of the labor force. Moreover job and career counselors have to be able to collaborate with people of all ages and personalities. (OECD, 2002). They need to be flexible in unexpected and challenging conditions that may stem from the varied needs, expectations, and psychological well-beings of their clients. Guiding all clients equally under any condition apparently has its roots in a high level of awareness about diversity and tolerance for differences.

As mentioned before, the content of the Job and Career Counseling Training Program included a section specific to disadvantaged groups. However, covering the dynamics of disadvantaged groups (Mayer, 2003: 1-7) is necessary but not sufficient in a training program of job and career counselors. Since "...professional development and career planning is an area where discrimination often occurs" (Shen et al., 2010: 2159), diversity is, in and of itself, a critical issue to be covered in a job and career counseling training program for developing a better understanding and realization of equity in serving to all clients. Authors share the idea that a course design devoted to increasing the awareness of and sensitivity to diversity among job and career counseling candidates is apparently needed and would be perfectly complementary.

The pointed inadequacy of diversity module in the job and career counseling training program has been initiative and has formed the foundation of this current research. Throughout the study researchers investigated the level of potentials of future job and career counselors' potential for diversity management performance, strength of their attitudes towards diversity, and the degree of their empathy skills. After indicating the levels of these three variables, the probable relationships among the constructs and the directions of the relationships are examined.

DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

Diversity

Diversity is a group characteristic which results from the aggregation of varied clusters where the members of each cluster shares a common individual characteristic and differentiates from the members of other clusters in terms of this specific common characteristic. In other words, diversity is any composite of themes attributed by similarities and differences (Ivancevich, 2010: 42). In parallel with these definitions of diversity, workforce diversity refers to "... a mix of people within a workforce who are considered to be, in some way, different from those in the prevailing constituency." (Schermerhorn et al., 2011: 45).

Simply put, diversity is the heterogeneity of a group composition whereas the workforce diversity is the distinguishing "...similarities and differences among the employees of organizations" (Moorhead and Griffin, 2010: 33). The heterogeneity may stem from several factors such as gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, age, physical capabilities, disability, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, social class, marital status, parental status, religion, political association, ex-offenders, learning and communication styles, place of birth or occupation, etc. (Cooke and Saini, 2010: 481).

The diversity issue is being referred to as a twofold phenomenon due to its potential benefits and its prospective negative outcomes in organizational settings. When categorization cognitions result in distant relationships, quality of the

exchanges is influenced negatively among the dissimilar organization members (Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002: 548). On the other hand high-quality exchanges nourished in an atmosphere of tolerance, perspective sharing, knowledge transfer, and collaboration is likely to create a fruitful diversity climate which has direct positive influences on organizational outcomes (Bacharach et al., 2005: 620-621).

Diversity Management

Diversity management refers to a specific perspective in management, which initially emerged in USA and gained popularity in other industrialized countries through 1990s and 2000s (Repeckiene et al., 2011: 882). Diversity management approach is far beyond being a merciful approach with an emphasis on including marginalized groups in the workforce (Mills, 2011: 47). Diversity management differentiates from alternative pluralistic approaches in that it heavily relies on the notion that diversity is valuable for the higher performance of the companies and it generates promises of market incentives (Richard and Andrevski, 2011; Richard, 2000: 165).

Diversity management, ideally, represents a set of actions and interventions devoted to create a harmony out of dissimilarities in the workplace. This management approach briefly, is an issue of performance level in accepting, regarding and drawing upon certain differences and similarities in an organization whereas effectively and consciously improving a management process which is future focused, value conformed, strategic, and leans against communication (Keil et al., 2007: 6). The main concern in diversity management is the creation of an organizational climate characterized by an appreciation towards differences, by a supportive work environment that provides equal opportunities to all employees, and by an inclusive culture of positive and fair treatment of all (Noe et al., 2008: 319).

Empathy

Empathy is a concept which has gained popularity in a wide range of areas in social sciences, including philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, clinical psychology, cognitive neuroscience, ethics, developmental and social psychology, phenomenology and hermeneutics (Coplan and Goldie, 2011: 9-10). The term is first coined by Titchener (1909), who actually relied on an analogy with “sympathy” while translating the German word “Einfühlung” with an influence of the Greek work “empathia” in order to refer to the natural tendency of individuals, to feel themselves into situations what they observe or imagine (Morrell, 2010: 46).

On contrary of the discrepancies and ambiguities in the literature on empathy, researchers indicate substantial consistency in the definitions of the term (Pavlovich and Krahnke, 2012: 132) as well as in the indicators in an individual difference measure of empathy (Davis, 1980: 85).

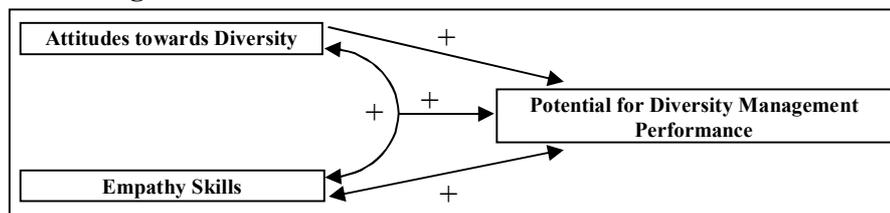
Empathy refers to a person’s ability “... to observe, know, and be sensitive to another’s feelings and emotions.” (Ferguson et al., 2010: 1). It is considered as a degree of cognitive and emotional openness to observe and realize another’s perspective and to act accordingly. It is the ability which creates a bond between individuals and others. The importance of empathy stems from the potential that this ability provides individuals “... to understand the intentions of others, predict their behavior, and experience an emotion triggered by their emotion.” (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright, 2004: 163). It influences the efficiency of all social interactions to a great extent.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has been designed to investigate the levels of ‘potential for diversity management performance’, ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’ among individuals who had successfully completed a job and career counseling training program of İŞKUR. The relationship of two construct ‘potential for diversity management performance’ and ‘empathy skills’ will be investigated as a further matter of interest. A complementary research question with the previous is generated to investigate the relationship between ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’.

Whether the two variables ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’ have an effect on ‘potential for diversity management performance’. Further the study will focus on revealing the effect of ‘attitudes towards diversity’ on ‘potential for diversity management performance’. In order to examine the predictors of ‘potential for diversity management performance’ in detail, the probable effects of ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’ on the construct will be analyzed as well. Whether ‘gender’ has a differentiating effect among job and career counselors in terms of their ‘empathy skills’, will constitute the final research question. The model is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Research



METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study, Research Rationale, and the Knowledge Need

In this current study we are examining individuals who are trained for job and career consultancy in terms of their ‘attitudes towards diversity’. Thereby the

focus of the study is to determine to what extent the counselors will be considering diversity issues in their professional life where they will be consulting the personnel responsible for personnel selection and placement, and career counseling in governmental organizations. Another point that will be investigated within the context of the research study is the relationship of ‘empathy skills’ with ‘potential for diversity management performance’ and with ‘attitudes towards diversity’ among individuals who are trained for job and career consultancy. In order to reveal the predictors of ‘potential for diversity management performance’, two complementary research questions are generated. In this context, researchers will first investigate the effect of ‘attitudes towards diversity’ on ‘potential for diversity management performance’. Second, the model where two independent variables are included will be analyzed. Therefore, the following research question will be whether the ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’ have an effect on ‘performance related to diversity’. Finally, the gender effects on levels of ‘empathy skills’ will be investigated.

The main contribution of the study will be the identification of the factors that should be considered in detail in diversity management at organizations. Furthermore the study has the potential to be a valuable addition to the literature, being one of the few researches in the area of diversity management in Turkish organizations. Besides these, the research has its strength in its multidisciplinary nature since it combines the effective tools and perspectives of human resource management and organizational behavior research areas.

Sample and Data Collection Method

The target population of this research composed of individuals who are candidates for working as job and career counselors in governmental organizations in Turkey and who had a special training on this expertise. To reach a higher level of generalizability, simple random sampling was adopted. In a simple random sampling, all units in the target population have an equal chance of being selected (Kalton, 1983: 8-9).

The complete list of the target population was derived by contacting the local representatives of the governmental organization which was coordinating the country-wide training program for job and career counseling. The target population of the research is constituted of 2500 job and career counseling candidates. Survey application was carried out both in hard-copy and on-line version in order to reach a higher number of participants. Individuals who participated in the training program in Istanbul were asked to fill in the hard-copy versions. On the other hand, the participants of the training in other cities of Turkey were contacted via e-mails including the related link for filling in the survey on-line.

Data collection process started in December 2011 and lasted in January 2012, taking 2 months in total. As a result of employing such a sampling methodology, a total of 266 sample units have been derived out of the sampling

frame. All the sampling units were candidates who have completed the job and career counseling training program and are still in the recruitment process of a governmental organization to work as job and career counselors in different offices of the same organization in all around Turkey.

Measurement Rationale and the Introduction of the Measurement Tools

The data collection was carried out via a questionnaire composed of three different scales and a question list. The three main constructs which build up the theoretical framework of this research were measured by related scales. The following Table 1 indicates the measures of the research variables employed in the current study. The data needed to have a clearer understanding of the basic characteristics of the sample, was collected by a composite of demographic questions.

The first of the three scales is the one which measures ‘potential for diversity management performance’. This scale is adapted from the Diversity Management Skill Situational Judgement Test (Biga, 2007: 69). The three of the researchers and a faculty, whose expertise is in Foreign Languages, collaborated for the translation, retranslation, and reconstruction of items. The scale is composed of 12 items just as in the original scale. Some sample items are “I am considerate of coworker’s group differences when I work with them.”, “I find it hard to take orders from managers of certain ethnic, religious, age, or gender groups.”, and “I can communicate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds.”.

The level of ‘empathy skills’ is measured by the Empathy Quotient Scale which is originally developed based on the Empathizing-Systemizing Theory by Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004). Researchers employed the short and Turkish version of the instrument which was adapted and tested in terms of reliability and validity by Bora and Baysan (2009: 45-47). The original version of the scale included 40 items tapping empathy and 20 filter items. For the ease of application and as a precaution for reliability of the responses, the 22 item short version of the scale was employed in the current study. The scale included items such as “I can easily tell if someone else wants to enter a conversation.”, “I am quick to spot when someone in a group is feeling awkward or uncomfortable.”, and “I am good at predicting what someone will do.”.

The third and the final scale administered to participants was the tool for measuring the ‘attitudes towards diversity’ among job and career counselors. Counselor’s Attitudes towards Diversity Scale was developed by the researchers of the current study. The scale was composed of 15 items. All items of the scale and the results of the reliability and validity analysis are presented in Appendix. The purpose of the scale was to examine the attitudes towards diversity issue in the context of job and career counseling profession.

Table 1: Measures of the Research Variables

Research Variables	Number of Items	Source of Scale	Measurement Format
Potential for Diversity Management Performance	12	Biga (2007)	5-points Likert Scale
Empathy Skills	22	Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004), adapted by Bora and Baysan (2009)	5-points Likert Scale
Attitudes of Job and Career Counselors towards Diversity	15	Authors of the Current Study	7-points Likert Scale
Socio-demographic Characteristics	3	Authors of the Current Study	Multiple Response Categories

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample were examined via three questions, asking the gender, marital status, and age of the participants.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Reliability Analysis

In order to examine the reliability of the measurement instruments, Cronbach alpha coefficient values are calculated for the scales of 'Potential for Diversity Management Performance', 'Empathy Skills', and 'Attitudes of Job and Career Counselors towards Diversity' and were found to be 0.718, 0.886, and 0.908 respectively.

The coefficient value is considered an indicator of the internal consistency of a scale or a subscale and as the alpha coefficient converges to 1, the inter-correlations among items of a scale or subscale approaches to unity (Zeller and Carmines, 1980). The coefficient values of all the three scales employed in this current study are above 0.70 which is the generally accepted cut-off point of Cronbach alpha coefficient value in social sciences (Vaus, 2004: 127; Kalaycı et al., 2005: 405).

Results of the Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The sampling framework is composed of 266 job and career counseling candidates who have completed the job and career counseling training program run by a governmental organization of Turkey in a country wide nature. The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 2.

The males and females are almost equally represented in the sample. There were 132 female and 130 male respondents which composed the 49.6% and 48.9% of the total participants, respectively. The number of respondents who haven't replied the gender classification question was 4 individuals occupying 1.5% of the complete sample.

Among the participants of the research study, the distribution of marital status was higher for singles with a total of 197 single respondents (74.1%). On the other hand, there were 64 married respondents which composed the 24.1% of the

total respondents. 5 individuals (1.9%) have not responded the marital status question.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Research Participants

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	132	49.6
	Female	130	48.9
Marital Status	Bachelor	197	74.1
	Married	64	24.1
Age Groups	20-25	84	31.6
	26-30	144	54.1
	31 or higher	37	13.9

The age was questioned in ordinal measurement level. Since most of the population was composed of new joiners to the workforce, three categories were presented in the age question. According to the responses, 84 (31.6%) of the respondents were in the 20-25 year old range, 144 (54.1%) respondents were in the 26-30 year old range, and finally 37 (13.9%) respondents were in the range of 31 year old or higher. The age question was left blank by 1 (0.4%) of the participants.

The descriptive statistical analysis of the scale variables are presented in Table 3. The means and standard deviations are calculated by referring to the total scores of the scale items. The average total score of the 'potential for diversity management performance' scale is 3.89 (SD=0.55) whereas it is 3.94 (SD=0.52) for the 'empathy skills' scale. Results reveal that job and career consultancy candidates have an orientation towards "slightly agree" as a response for 'potential for diversity management performance' and 'empathy skills' scales, indicating a positive but not very high level of mean points. However for the 'attitudes of job and career counselors towards diversity' scale, respondents have the tendency to report higher levels of agreement in general, leaning towards "agree" among the response options. The average total score of participants in 'attitudes of job and career counselors towards diversity' scale is 6.57 (SD=0.77).

One of the most interesting findings of the research is around the issue of 'attitudes towards diversity'. When the 'attitudes towards diversity' scale is analyzed item by item, the 'sexual orientation' item is found to have the minimum average score with a mean value of 5,96 (SD=1,43). This finding reveals that 'sexual orientation' is the least tolerated characteristic among all diversity factors from the perspective of future job and career counselors. A further investigation of the result indicated that females and males significantly differ in terms of their 'attitudes towards sexual orientation'. Females have an average of 6.17 (SD=1.19) whereas males have an average of 5.73 (SD=1.63) for this specific item. Depending on the t-test results, the mean value for the women is significantly higher than the mean value for men ($p=0.014 < 0.05$, $t=2.470$).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistical Analysis of the Scale Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Potential for Diversity Management Performance	266	3.89	0.55
Empathy Skills	265	3.94	0.52
Attitudes of Job and Career Counselors towards Diversity	265	6.57	0.77

Results of the Inferential Statistical Analysis

The first research question of this study was whether there was a relationship between ‘potential for diversity management performance’ and ‘empathy skills’ of job and career consultancy candidates who had participated in a training program on this expertise. To answer this question, the first pair of null and alternative hypothesis is formulated. For the ease of reading and understanding, only the alternative hypothesis will be presented all through this section.

H₁: There is a positive correlation between ‘potential for diversity management performance’ levels and ‘empathy skills’ of individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy.

In order to statistically verify the proposed relationship, the relevant data was subjected to the correlation analysis. Results reveal that we would reject H₀ (that there is no correlation) in favor of H₁ (that there is positive correlation) at the 1% level of significance. There is a positive average correlation ($r=0.618$, $p<0.01$) between ‘potential for diversity management performance’ levels and ‘empathy skills’ of individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy.

Concerning the second research question, the authors intended to investigate whether the ‘potential for diversity management performance’ levels of individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy are influenced by their ‘attitudes towards diversity’.

H₂: The ‘attitudes towards diversity’ among individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy have a positive effect on their levels of ‘potential for diversity management performance’.

Table 4: Results of the Regression Analysis Where ‘Potential for Diversity Management Performance’ is the Dependent Variable

Independent Variable	Model Summary			
	Beta	F Value	t	P
Attitudes towards Diversity	0.435	61.448	7.839	0.000

Regression analysis was employed in order to investigate the second research question. Results indicate that ‘attitudes towards diversity’ significantly predicts 18.9% of total variance of ‘potential for diversity management performance’ levels of individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy ($r=0.435$, $R^2=0.189$, $p<0.01$). Table 4 displays the results of the regression analysis for the second research hypothesis.

In the third research question the focus was on the relationship between the two concepts of ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’.

H₃: There is a positive correlation between the level of ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’ of individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy.

Correlation analysis is employed for statistically testing the proposed relationship. According to the results H₀ (that there is no correlation) is rejected in favour of H₁ (that there is positive correlation) at the 1% level of significance. There is a positive average correlation (r=0.392, p<0.01) between ‘attitudes towards diversity’ levels and ‘empathy skills’ of individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy.

The fourth research question was designed for indicating the probable effects of ‘attitudes towards diversity’ and ‘empathy skills’ of future job and career counselors on their levels of ‘potential for diversity management performance’.

H₄: The ‘empathy skills’ and the ‘attitudes towards diversity’ of individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy have a positive effect on their levels of ‘potential for diversity management performance’.

Table 5: Results of the Regression Analysis with Two Independent Variables Where ‘Potential for Diversity Management Performance’ is the Dependent Variable

Independent Variable	Model Summary			
	Beta	F Change	t	P
Empathy Skills	0.558	163.337	4.502	0.000
Attitudes towards Diversity	0.163	20.266	10.438	0.000

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if the ‘empathy skills’ and the ‘attitudes towards diversity’ significantly predicted participants' ratings of ‘potential for diversity management performance’. The results of the regression indicated the two predictors explained 42.2% of the variance (r=0.653, R²=0.426, p<0.01). It was found that ‘empathy skills’ significantly predicted ‘potential for diversity management performance’ (β=.558, p<0.01), as did ‘attitudes towards diversity’ (β=.163, p<0.01).

In the final research question researchers focused on the gender issue to reveal differences between male and female trainees of job and career consultancy, if there are any, in terms of their ‘empathy skills’.

H₅: The average level of ‘empathy skills’ do differ by gender among the individuals who were trained on job and career consultancy.

The results of the t-test analysis revealed that females had significantly higher levels of ‘empathy skills’ compared to males (p:0.03<0.05 and t:2,181) when equal variances assumed. Average levels of ‘empathy skills’ for females was 4.02 (SD=0.45) whereas it is 3.87 (SD=0.56) for males.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Interest in the issue of diversity is increasing exponentially both in the academic arena and in business environment. The main stream of this interest in studies of diversity is due to the potential of the concept to create the best composition of individuals to maximize organizational performance. The highly influential worldwide realities (such as the blurred geographical boundaries, the increasing mobility of the workforce, the rapidly changing workforce profile with an increase in the once minority groups, etc.) of the business life naturally necessitate particular sensitivity to diversity. Management approaches as well as human resource management strategies and practices need to be tailored to fit the contemporary requirements of the workplace stemming from a diversified workforce. Such a perspective shift may arise and create impressive results only if the awareness about diversity can be increased among all employees through a realization and acceptance of differences, through a better understanding of how to create synergy out of diversity, and through a deeper insight into the pros and cons of the concept. Qualified human resources management professionals, who have high consciousness on diversity, play a key role in attaining harmony and success out of variety.

Job and career counseling in the structure of Turkish Employment Organization (İŞKUR), as well as other human resources management related professions, has an exceptional peculiarity from a diversity standpoint. Their critical role in handling diversity is multi-fold due to job and career counselors' responsibilities towards their individual clients, towards their business clients, and towards their own organizations. This research basically focused on the diversity issues in terms of counselor-individual client relationships. A sample of individuals who were unemployed at the time of the research application and who had successfully completed the Job and Career Counseling Training Program of Turkish Employment Organization was investigated in terms of their 'attitudes towards diversity', 'potential for diversity management performance', and 'empathy skills'. The research findings reveal that 'empathy skills' and 'attitudes towards diversity' significantly predict 'potential for diversity management performance' levels of future job and career counselors. Moreover results point out that there is a significant effect for gender, with women having higher 'empathy skills' than men. The item analysis bring out the results that 'gender' significantly differentiates the attitudes related to 'sexual orientation', 'physical characteristics', 'age', 'religion', and 'education level', although with differing error margins.

This research is one of the few empirical studies in the Turkish context. As an attempt for revealing the local characteristics of the perspectives towards diversity issue, the study provides mighty and gainful findings. The study finds a ground to explore the factors that affect 'diversity management performance' levels of job and career counselors by providing an insight into the individual factors. Further studies are needed to assess contextual factors affecting the 'diversity

management performance' levels. Within this realm, researchers propose that an investigation of 'diversity management performances' in terms of the effects of 'training programs with an emphasis on diversity awareness' through a before and after research design; effects of 'diversity climate' through a peer pairing research design; and effects of 'industrial differences' through a comparative research design would be fruitful to contribute to an understanding of how to increase diversity management performances of job and career counselors.

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APPENDIX: Results of the Validity Analysis of the ‘Attitudes of Job and Career Counselors towards Diversity’ Scale

Scale Item	Factor Scores of the First Dimension
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their race.	0.829
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their genders.	0.896
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their ages.	0.849
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their physical appearances.	0.881
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their ethnic origins.	0.919
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their religions.	0.885
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their places of birth.	0.945
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of the language they are speaking.	0.898
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their sexual orientations.	0.613
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their cultures.	0.933
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their levels of education.	0.870
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their physical disabilities.	0.814
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their political views.	0.752
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their marital status.	0.888
I equally respect and support my clients regardless of their national origins.	0.931