



## A Phenomenological Research on Creativity in the Psychological Counseling Process

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### ABSTRACT

Creativity is an important phenomenon and has lately been taken into consideration in the field of counseling. The aim of this study is to explore the phenomenon of creativity in the counseling process against the backdrop of psychological counselors' experiences. The research uses a semi-structured interview form in accordance with this based on the descriptive phenomenological design. The study group consists of eight psychological counselors (6 women, 2 men) working with various theoretical orientations and age groups and were selected using criterion sampling, a purposeful sampling method. By the end of the research, four themes had been identified related to the phenomenon of creativity: psychological counselors' experiences regarding creativity, the facilitating factors of creativity, the inhibitory factors of creativity, and the functions of creativity. The results from the research have concluded that educational programs should be structured based on psychological counselors' creative skills and disseminated in the field.

Counseling is a professional mental health service that addresses many situations, events, and phenomena of life and attempts to find solutions in order for clients to develop and adapt (Gibson & Mitchell, 1990). Counseling has various phases. The first phase is the commitment phase, in which the client talks about their life story and the reason why they've applied for counseling. The possibility exists for an appropriate working accord to occur between the psychological counselor and the client during this phase, as well as the possibility of ending the meetings with the first session due to some difficulties that may arise between the psychological counselor and client (de Rivera, 1992; Vriend & Dyer, 1973). After an accord is achieved, psychological counselors use certain skills such as reframing, interpreting, and self-disclosure to help the client work on their transformation, development, and perception and look at their lives differently (Gladding & Batra, 2007). During these two basic phases as well as any other intermediate stages described in different counseling models, psychological counselors may experience certain difficulties and attempt to overcome these difficulties decisively. The use of creativity skills for overcoming these difficulties or making the counseling room a more effective place can be considered a very important issue for psychological counselors.

Looking at the general definition of creativity would be helpful before examining the psychological counselors' relationship with creativity. Creativity is a sequence of thoughts and actions that lead to a novel adaptive output (Lubart, 2001). Creativity has been the subject of various models as a phenomenon possessing stages. According to Wallas (1996), an important pioneer in this field, creativity consists of four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. Following directly after the preparation stage, incubation is the stage in which a problem/situation is evaluated unconsciously. In this stage, the subject feels

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highly concerned about creativity until a solution is developed. This can take a very long time or may take a short time. Guilford (1950, p. 451) also noted a considerable consensus to be present in the fieldwork regarding all creative actions to involve these four important steps of preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification.

In the context of counseling, creativity is a skill that follows no particular line, has broad diversity, is teachable, and at the very least is encouraged (Cohen, 2001). Compared to many other subjects studied in the field of counseling, not much research can be said to have occurred regarding the phenomenon of creativity. Less than 1% of all research in counseling and psychology has been conducted on creativity (Gladding, 2011). In spite of this, a creative counseling process can help both psychological counselors and clients understand themselves and their environment differently, thus opening a new door onto better lifestyles along the way.

Counseling theorists have often emphasized the importance of creativity in their theories. Freud considered creativity to be a defense mechanism through the concept of the sublime; Adler saw clients' creative expressions as an indicator of growth and development and encouraged creativity in accordance with this. Gestalt theorists regard creativity as a tool for integration and change (i.e., trying strange or unconventional new behaviors; see Carson, 1999). According to the existentialist psychologist May (1994), creativity is the process of bringing things to life. Creativity requires passion and commitment. Symbols and legends are born through creative action, and creativity signals new life by revealing a potential that had been hidden. From the perspective of cognitive psychology, the development of divergent thinking as a concept closely associated with creativity and the enhancement of new visual images are often a prerequisite for behavioral change and emotional relief (Hocevar, 1980). Creativity in postmodern counseling orientations that focus on language, communication, and storytelling is seen to be developable by making use of artistic sources such as humor (Franzini, 2011), metaphor (Storlie et al., 2018), photography (Ginicola et al., 2012), and poetry (Canel, 2015). Although the concepts and contexts have changed, counseling theories are seen to place the phenomenon of creativity at the center of development and transformation.

Creativity is a learned skill and activity that psychological counselors often engage with in practice as well as in theory (Kottler & Hecker, 2002). According to Frey (1975), counseling in its most general sense is a creative initiative in which a client and psychological counselor combine their resources to create a new plan, develop a different perspective, formulate alternative behaviors, and start a new life. In addition, all therapeutic approaches that promote individual well-being involve parallel activities that improve creativity such as: (a) increased personal growth, awareness, and self-confidence; (b) advanced problem-solving capabilities (i.e. looking at a phenomenon or producing multiple paths to approach a situation); (c) advanced human relations; (d) powerful but more balanced internal locus of control and responsibility; and (e) the abandonment of traditional forms of living and the acquisition of new perceptions and roles (Carson, 1999).

Creativity is a critical phenomenon for the present and future of an effective psychological counselor. Gladding (2008) regards creativity as an important component in advancement any important cultural phenomena, including effective counseling. Important counseling theories and skills have been developed around creativity. If the existence of counseling is to be desired in the future, psychological counselors must study the art of expression, read a lot, and make themselves more creative by traveling and observing human nature in a variety of ways. A creative counseling process forces both the psychological counselor and the client to respond more definitively and boldly to their current interactions. It requires psychological counselors to use their imagination deeply and have the flexibility to flow freely through improvisation. The use of creativity in counseling encourages transformation in which every session inspires unexpected thoughts and actions (Keeney, 2010).

Due to creativity's important position in the counseling process, some researchers have also developed models and educational curricula that serve to improve psychological counselors' creativity. Buser et al. (2011) aimed to develop important skills such as flexibility during consultation, divergent thinking, and the ability to create new solutions using the SCAMPER (substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put to another use, eliminate, reverse) model. Lawrence et al. (2015) prepared an educational curriculum and suggested that creativity can be

improved through appropriate risk-taking, tolerance for uncertainty, and improvisation skills.

The scarcity of research on the phenomenon of creativity in the counseling literature and the lack of any scientific research focused on life in this regard can be said to be the most important reason for this research being conducted. Additionally, the types of qualitative research that occur in a field dominated by in-depth relations such as counseling are thought to be able to assist in concentrating on and understanding these subjective experiences and life. Starting from this point of view, the current research aims to explore the phenomenon of creativity, which can be considered of utmost importance in the counseling process, against the backdrop of the lives of psychological counselors; as such, it attempts to answer to the following questions:

1. How do psychological counselors perceive the phenomenon of creativity in the context of counseling?
2. What do psychological counselors feel and think during a counseling session when they experience creativity and when they are unable to experience it (when they feel blocked)?
3. What do psychological counselors do in their daily lives to improve their creativity?
4. What do psychological counselors think about the functions of creativity?

## Method

### Design

The study uses the descriptive phenomenological design. Phenomenology explores the ways in which a phenomenon is similarly experienced by several people. It attempts to transform the individual experiences related to the phenomenon into an explanation with a universal essence (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Langridge, 2007). Descriptive phenomenology attempts to describe the participants' expressions as they are instead of the researchers' comments. Researchers attempt to suppress their own experiences as much as possible throughout the process (Moustakas, 1994). This research seeks to uncover how psychological counselors experience the phenomenon of creativity in counseling based on the descriptive phenomenological design and to explore common experiences.

### Sample

The study group for this research was determined using criterion sampling, a type of purposeful sampling (Schumacher & McMillan, 2006). The determined criterion is that the participating psychological counselors are actively seeing clients from different age groups. The study group is composed of individuals who've been referred by psychological counselors with whom the authors are affiliated. The study does not use real names; instead, each participant has chosen an alias. The participants' demographic information is as follows:

Muzeyyen is a 28-year-old female. She has been seeing adult clients with psychodynamic orientation for 4 years.

Irem is a 43-year-old female. She has been using systemic consultancy in her work with couples, families, and adults for 3 years.

Deniz is a 32-year-old female. She has been counseling adolescents, adults, and couples using eclectic therapy (psychodynamic, behavioral, psychodrama) for 7 years.

Ela is a 29-year-old female. She has been working with preschool and primary school clients using an experiential play therapy for 5 years.

Elif is a 27-year-old female. She has been counseling children and adolescents (13-25 years old) using narrative therapy orientation for 6 years.

Toprak is a 30-year-old male. He has been working with young adult (18-22 years old) clients using eclectic therapy (solution-oriented, cognitive behavioral therapy [CBT], logotherapy) for 6 years.

Yavuz is a 27-year-old male. He has been seeing child, adolescent, and young adult clients using a holistic approach (psychodynamics, CBT, schema therapy) for 5 years.

Oktay is a 27-year-old male. He has been working with child clients (2-9 years old) using systemic family therapy and experiential play therapy for 5 years.

### **Ethical Statement**

This research was reviewed and given permission by the Institute of Educational Sciences Ethics Committee of Marmara University (Decision Number: 2100042399, Date: 1/20/2021). The participants also participated in the study voluntarily.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

The data collection tool was initiated by scanning the existing literature on the phenomenon of creativity in counseling. The literature on this issue is seen to remain largely unexplored; therefore, draft questions have been prepared. The related questions were finalized through the opinions and suggestions of two expert counseling and guidance academicians who've been providing graduate and post-graduate courses on qualitative research methods. A semi-structured form was used in the interviews. This form was composed by surveying the literature on creativity and looking at the observations and impressions the authors have acquired from their own counseling sessions. The interviews were conducted individually with participants. Probe questions were asked as needed in addition to those on the form. The interview form contains the following questions:

1. Can you talk about the place creativity has in the context of counseling as a psychological counselor?
2. Can you convey a few instances during counseling sessions where you thought you were creative; what were your feelings and thoughts in these situations?
3. Can you convey a few instances in which you thought you were not creative (felt blocked) during counseling sessions; what were your feelings and thoughts in that situation?
4. Do you do anything in your daily life to improve your creativity in counseling sessions? If so, can you talk about them and explain how they've contributed to your creativity?
5. How do you feel about the function your creativity skills have in the counseling process?
6. How do you feel about the repercussions your creativity and/or lack of creativity have on your clients?

After agreeing upon the study group and obtaining the participants' voluntary participation, a brief explanation was made about the purpose of the study as well as a mention about the privacy policy. Due to the research coinciding with the COVID-19 (February 20 to April 1, 2021) outbreak, the sessions were conducted in the form of online video chats. Interview times varied between 30-40 minutes. The conversations were recorded with a voice recorder and then transcribed verbatim by the authors. The researchers, participants, and clients only used Turkish in the research. This English version of the article uses a translation of these transcriptions.

### **Data Analysis**

The obtained data were first encoded on a sentence-by-sentence basis using the inductive method; abstractions were then made, and certain themes emerged. Afterward, a transition occurred from themes to categories using the deductive method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Lastly, the findings were interpreted descriptively using direct quotations.

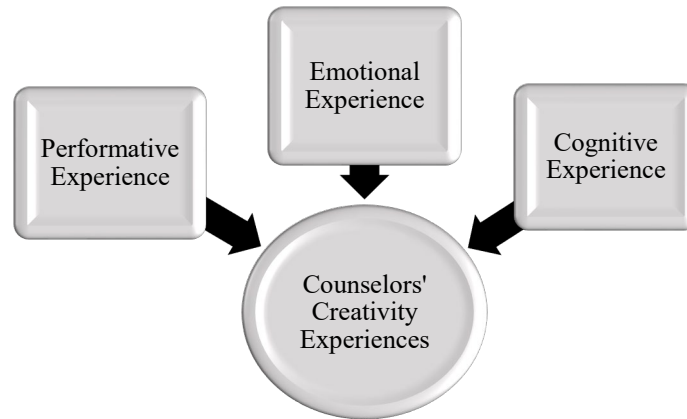
When evaluating the study in terms of credibility, transmissibility, and consistency, the internal credibility and validity of the research is based on the researchers' convictions that they've provided sufficient data (Merriam, 2009), that the participants have conveyed their real experiences, that the dialogues have been transcribed accurately, and that the structural descriptions are capable of explaining unique life experiences (Polkinghorne 1989). External validity in quantitative research is expressed as transmissibility. Qualitative research is based on understanding the experience of the individual. As such, participants' experiences are detailed and described adequately and appropriately; the data is generalized with the intention of making it accessible to other researchers (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The themes in this research have been adequately and appropriately described in detail. The consistency and reliability of the research data were determined using the method of participant confirmation (Erlandson et al., 1993). The researchers interviewed some of the participants individually for a second time and asked them to evaluate the inferences and interpretations from the research findings. The participants confirmed the accuracy of the findings.

## Results

The data obtained from the participants have been divided into four main themes: Psychological Counselors' Creativity Experiences, the Factors Facilitating Creativity, the Factors Inhibiting Creativity, and the Functions of Creativity. The sub-themes of the four main themes are described in detail below.

### Psychological Counselors' Creativity Experiences

**Figure-1:** The Theme and Sub-Themes of Psychological Counselors' Creativity Experiences



As seen in Figure 1, the psychological counselors' creative experiences have been sub-thematized as performative experiences, emotional experiences, and cognitive experiences in accordance with the observations.

**Performative Experience.** The psychological counselors' performative creative experiences in sessions are understood to appear in various styles and techniques such as storytelling, imagery, changing positions around the room, adaptation, asking exploratory questions, interpreting, and gamification. The psychological counselors sometimes experienced the performative part of their creativity by adapting a ready-made technique to the relevant agenda. The experience of a counselor using the adaptation technique is a good example of this:

*There was this child with whom I was having a hard time. I decided to explain the systems of feelings and thoughts from cognitive behavioral therapy. This child didn't talk, so we put circles on the ground with each circle representing emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. We completed the session by moving through these circles. (Elif)*

The counselors reported that they sometimes conducted their performative experiences by using unique interventions based on the therapeutic requirements of their client's difficulty. As with the experience of a counselor who changes positions around the room:

*Now, I don't know if this can be called creativity, but the first thing that comes to mind is this: I was seeing a couple. There were high tensions between them and acted very aggressively toward one another. They worked themselves up into a rage quickly. I was worried that they might resort to violence in the session at that moment. What I did at that time was to sit between them for a while, and when I sat between them, of course, the tension dropped and they laughed. At that moment we had prevented what might have ended up in violence. (Irem)*

**Emotional Experience.** All psychological counselors tend to agree that the emotional experience of creativity is experienced as competence. Meanwhile, various emotions are also experienced alongside this feeling in a creative process, such as relaxation, satisfaction, pleasure, excitement, uniqueness, hope, and confidence. Some psychological counselors who regard the emotional experience of creativity as competence have reported this sense of competence to be impermanent:

*There's something about this sense of competence. There's no certainty that this is going to continue like this. It's a competence that comes instantaneously in a way I did not plan. It's a state where things are back on the rails. I cannot be sure if this can or will ever happen again. (Ela)*

According to some psychological counselors, the sense of uniqueness that appears during the creative process is not only felt by the psychological counselor but is also realized in the inner space shared by the psychological counselor and the client:

*Creativity is the uniqueness that is felt between the psychological counselor and the client. I believe it is something collective that comes out in the moment and is unique to that client, something produced not only by the psychological counselor but also by the client. (Elif)*

*I would say that the sense of creativity belongs to a subjective space created uniquely by each client and psychological counselor. A third factor occurs between each psychological counselor and the client, and I would say that creativity is the space created in the context of this third factor and is dependent on that pair. (Yavuz)*

**Cognitive Experience.** The psychological counselors stated experiencing the cognitive aspect of creativity in the forms of spontaneity, imagination, analysis, flow, and risk taking. Spontaneity was the most widely reported experience among the psychological counselors' cognitive descriptions of the moments of creativity:

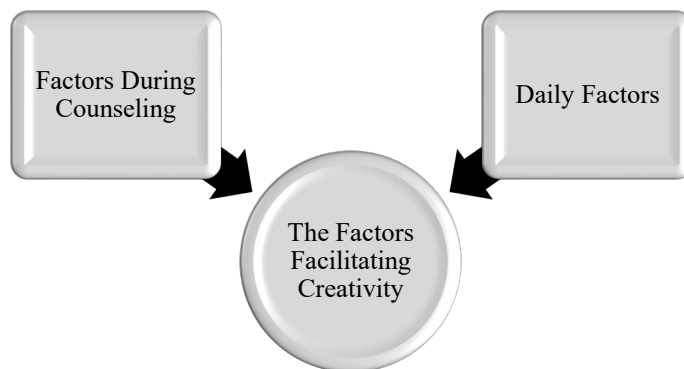
*I plan some things ahead of time. By plan, I mean that I do not think that I will do such and such in the next session; instead, I have the subject in the back of my mind and am thinking of ways to work with them. It mostly comes about spontaneously within the session. (Deniz)*

The following quotation is a cross-section imagination experience from one psychological counselor who was listening to a story from her client who was angry and blaming himself for doing the same things over and over again, despite being aware that he is hurting himself:

*What my client talked about made me think of someone trying to leave somewhere but who gets scared every time they go out and thus go right back to the same place... He would return to the same place because it was his safe space, even though he wanted to leave. (Muzeyyen)*

### Facilitating Factors of Creativity

**Figure-2:** The Theme and Sub-Themes of the Factors Facilitating Creativity



As seen in Figure 2, the factors that facilitate the emergence of creativity as a skill are discussed under two sub-headings: factors during counseling and daily factors.

**Factors During Counseling.** What the psychological counselors had to say about the factors that facilitate creativity during counseling have been thematized as follows: the psychological counselor's experience-based competence, the psychological counselor's emotional blockage, the psychological counselor's relational attitude, the psychological counselor's intuition, the use of a ready-made technique, the ability to establish an appropriate therapeutic framework, and psychological counselor-client compatibility.

The factors that facilitate psychological counselors' creativity during a session consist of emotions with positive content such as competence and intuition, as well as emotional blockages with negative content such as anxiety and desperation. In order for creativity to emerge in a desired situation, the level of difficulty needs to be one the psychological counselor can manage:

*One thing that a psychological counselor can clearly see is how to look at the situation professionally; if the client is opposed to this, I usually feel blocked at this point. Here is where something comes into play: creativity. It is like approaching a matter indirectly from a different direction. (Toprak)*

According to the participating psychological consultants, the therapeutic framework needs to be properly structured in advance in order for creativity to develop. Creativity needs a solid foundation to emerge:

*Yes, creativity is an integral part of counseling. But it has some essentials. I try not to ignore the importance of paying attention to these essentials. Creativity is good, but the other parts such as drawing up a nice framework for counseling are also very important. (Elif)*

**Daily Factors.** The inferences the psychological counselors made about the daily facilitators of creativity have been sub-thematized as follows: art, literature, physical activities, educational activities, creative cognition, initiating new experiences, the psychological counselor's personal therapy style, and games. The psychological counselors stated that having various interests and activities in everyday life such as literature facilitate their in-session creativity:

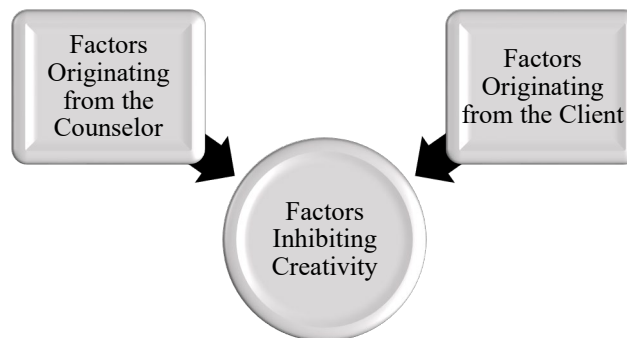
*Literature and the stories people tell have contributed much to me because what we see there as clinical psychopathology is described so beautifully in a novel as a reflection of everyday life. Apart from labels and diagnoses, you can change the way you intervene by using literary stories. (Okta)*

Many of these interests and activities consist of unstructured and unconstrained activities such as creative mindfulness:

*I love spending time in nature. The time I spend in nature; the calmness and tranquility, and the fact that I can evaluate myself, think, and contemplate... I think these contribute to me a lot. (Toprak)*

**Factors Inhibiting Creativity**

**Figure-3:** The Theme and Sub-Themes of the Inhibitory Factors Of Creativity



According to the psychological counselors, creativity is sometimes blocked for various reasons, and therefore, the psychological counselor feels blocked. As seen in Figure 3, inferences made about the inhibitory factors of creativity were analyzed under two sub-themes: those originating from the psychological counselor and those originating from the client.

**Inhibitory Factors Originating from the Psychological Counselor.** These factors that inhibit creativity can be conveyed as follows: inexperience, tiredness, feeling overruled by the client's feelings, and the desire to get quick results. Inexperience was the theme most participants focused on. With experience comes the feeling of competence, which helps in finding solutions to blockages.

*I'm no longer at the point where we get stuck together in the same spiral as the client. I can see more objectively. I find different solutions. I felt inadequate before... this is already the general sense of novice psychological counselors. It's because they don't have enough experience. Maybe it's about whether one has enough tools in one's toolbox. As the toolbox grew, it became easier for me to find more options. (Irem)*

Psychological counselors' desire to get quick results is another important obstacle in the way of creativity:

*I am a psychological counselor trying to get quick results. It's like I want to see some progress in two or three sessions. Yes, it's a long process, actually. I need to adapt myself more to that. In moments of despair like these, I wonder if I am not the right person for this. (Elif)*

**Inhibitory Factors Originating from the Client.** Other factors that inhibit creativity were found to originate from the client as follows: clients not being ready, having emotional breakdowns, and resisting. According to the psychological counselors, clients' emotional breakdowns, especially when crying for a long time, hinders the client's creative ability:

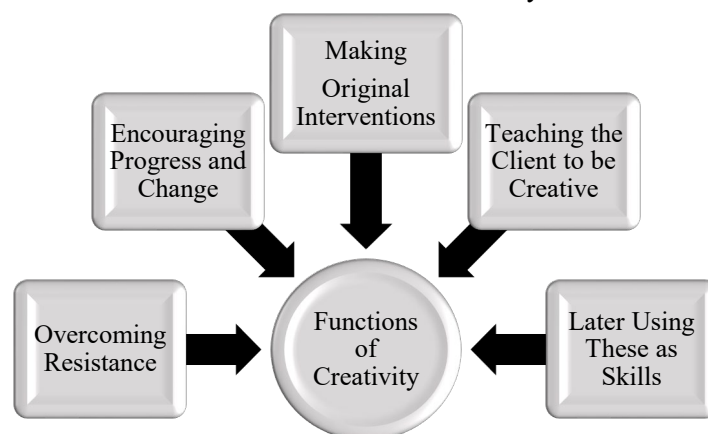
*It was a session where a client described her sexual trauma. She was sharing this experience for the first time in her life in so many words. I guess she talked about it for about 20 or 25 minutes and cried. And I felt so powerless in the face of this situation, and all I had in mind was just, "She's so sensitive, don't hurt her." I had to act in such a way that wouldn't hurt her... because I felt so preoccupied after her speech that it was as if all the images in my mind and what I had described as creativity had completely disappeared. (Muzeyyen)*

When a client's resistance is experienced in the form of unwillingness to look at the issues the psychological counselor points out, the psychological counselor may lose creativity:

*One of my clients I have been seeing lately in particular was showing resistance to change and thought the problem was only related to his child. When I mentioned this to the client, I felt that we couldn't move forward; I felt blocked since whatever we talked about, he somehow found an excuse to deny his role. (Ela)*

### Functions of Creativity

**Figure-4:** The Theme and Sub-Themes of the Functions of Creativity



As seen in Figure 4, the inferences the psychological counselors made about the functions of creativity are sub-thematized as follow: overcoming resistance, encouraging progress and change, making original interventions, teaching the client to be creative, and later using these as skills. The psychological counselors feel that creativity makes them unique in a professional sense:

*Access to information is now very easy. It may be useful for the client to hear things in a different context, rather than hear what they already know from me once again when talking about things in the consultation room. (Elif)*

In addition to the functions provided for the psychological counselor, creativity can also become a skill for the client:



*I observe that when I can be more creative, the clients can then apply these creative methods to themselves, or they can research different methods and use their own creativity. (Deniz)*

### Discussion

The first theme of this research aims to understand the phenomenon of creativity in counseling through the lives of psychological counselors and has been thematized as psychological counselors' creativity experiences. The experience of creativity has performative, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. This basic finding of the study is in line with those from Bergin and Garfield (1994), who stated that we live in an experiential and eclectic age, an atheoretical period, and that contemporary psychological counseling schools have an attitude toward eclectic interpretations of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral approaches. This research shows the creative effect walking has on the performative experience of creativity for both the counselor and client. Psychological counselors are able to overcome the blockage of dysfunctional cognitive skills while addressing clients' needs by activating bodily movement. Opezzo and Schwartz's (2014) study, in which they proved the significant effect of walking on generating alternative thoughts, divergent thinking, and free flow of ideas, also presented an important finding about counselors' activeness. Structured techniques such as puppet therapy (Dillen et al., 2009), creative writing (Gladding & Wallace, 2018; Warren et al., 2010), and spectrogram (Kole, 1967) can be said to have an encouraging function for psychological counselors. Quite interestingly, the results from this research match with those from Carson et al.'s (2003) qualitative study that analyzed the role of creativity over 142 marriage and family psychological counselors. According to the results, psychological counselors who can be creative make use of Gestalt interventions such as performance art therapy (i.e., drawing problems/possible solutions); murals and collages; stories, parables, and tales that provide useful visuals for clients; writing a letter and other forms of narrative therapy; and various uses of empty chairs and mirrors. As can be seen, performance experience involves various applications. The defining point here is to stay in the context of the client's experience and needs. Creative experience thus emerges in the context of accurately detecting the client's relevant needs rather than directly applying ready-made techniques.

One of the key cognitive experiences of creativity has been identified as risk-taking. Counseling involves more than risk quantification. Whether for reflecting a client's unspoken feelings or for identifying inconsistencies, challenging inconsistencies, or expressing oneself, therapeutic work requires psychological counselors to step out of their safety zone. This is an act rarely undertaken and has no guarantee of success. According to Lawrance et al. (2015), given the ongoing nature of risk in counseling, psychological counselors must recognize this phenomenon and learn to distinguish between risky behaviors and appropriate risks. As a matter of fact, the current study found taking risks to be a cognitive experience of creativity, and psychological counselors are thought to possibly require a basis in creativity in order to take appropriate risks. Mitchell (2016) found counselors' taking risks to be important as long as the limits of the therapeutic relationship were taken into account and suggested some exercises that would serve to improve this cognitive experience.

According to Benjamin (1984), imagination is identified as one of the cognitive experiences of creativity and can help people imagine themselves in a situation and experience various outcomes. Imagination provides psychological counselors with an incubation period that allows ideas to be born. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) stated creative psychological counselors to be pliant and open to new ideas, to be tolerant of uncertainty, and to have a wide range of curiosity energy and vivid dreams. According to the findings from this current research, imagination has been found to be one of the most obvious cognitive experiences of creativity. Imagination is a visual resource that helps overcome the limited speech-based structure of counseling sessions when necessary.

The second theme of the study was thematized as the factors facilitating creativity and discussed under two sub-themes: factors in the consultation room and daily factors. One of the most important findings of this research can be said to have been identified in this theme: In order for psychological counselors to be able to express their creativity, they need to experience a considerable amount of psychological strain, such as emotional blockage. May (1994) positioned himself very close to this finding when he states that consciousness can only discover possibilities when it encounters limitations and a dialectical tension and that this is necessary for the emergence of awareness. For Hecker and Kotler (2002), experiencing a blockage is a tendency to initiate creativity. Most psychological counselors feel blocked during the counseling process with some clients,

whether once or several times. Counseling is process in which the psychological counselor and the client are able to benefit from their creativity because creativity typically arises from disappointment or the need for a solution. Keeney (2010) stated creative therapists to be subjected to many complaints from their clients in the first stage, that the first stage is like a quagmire for these therapists, and that the psychological counselor and client feel blocked in this stage, which leads the psychological counselor to desperation and, in turn, allows them to be creative. All the psychological counselors who participated in the research stated that, prior to the emergence of creativity skills, they had all felt blocked when trying to manage the flow of the session and that, by getting inspiration from that moment of blockage, they displayed creativity skills. This reveals a dialectical relationship to exist between creativity and feeling blocked.

Another noteworthy finding of the research is the determination of the importance of everyday activities among the factors facilitating creativity. Thomas and Morris (2017) claimed that everyday activities are an important issue that preserve and improve psychological counselors' creativity and self-care. Activities such as meditating, praying, visiting art museums, painting and drawing, and taking a walk while listening to music before or after a session are among the methods for preserving psychological counselors' creativity by taking some time for themselves. The findings from this research regarding everyday activities are also consistent with the general findings and recommendations in the literature. Having psychological counselors not be trapped in their professional role but instead come into contact with different aspects of life can be said to be a practical necessity.

The third theme of creativity in counseling has been thematized as the factors inhibiting creativity. This situation can also be referred to as a blockage in creativity and may be experienced due to both the psychological counselor and the client. The participants stated their inexperience as psychological counselors in particular and their desire to get quick results to have negatively affected creativity. Indeed, the results from the qualitative Oven and Lobe's (2018) qualitative study over 22 experienced psychological counselors revealed that the process of creativity involves the trial and error method before reaching the desired effect, that no recipe exists for creativity, that creativity is a complicated phenomenon, and that the different aspects of creativity should be taken into consideration in order to use it in counseling. The desire to achieve quick results in this study can be understood to be related to psychological counselors' professional experience, and this desire is understood to create performance anxiety and prevent creativity.

The fourth and final theme identified in the research is the functions of creativity. The functions of creativity help the therapeutic process and therefore facilitate clients' development and recovery. Oven and Lobe (2018) claimed creativity to be a therapeutic skill that connects and establishes bridges, which enables clients to express themselves. Creativity helps healthily eliminate the blockages that may sometimes inhibit the healing process. According to Hecker and Kottler (2002), the validation stage, being the final stage of the creativity process, is the stage where solutions are tested. Upon reaching this stage, the client will probably respond positively. The data obtained from the participating psychological counselors suggests that creativity supports and secures lasting healing processes by giving the client creative abilities in their lives.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the research show creativity to be one of the main phenomena of counseling. Some conclusions may be drawn and recommendations made in light of the research findings. The determination that creativity is primarily a skill that can be developed is promising for counseling practices. Another important conclusion is that creativity is not one-dimensional. Creativity is experienced by psychological counselors in three different dimensions: performative, emotional and cognitive. Therefore, creativity can be said to not just be an intuitive experience in the moment but to also have a more complex and relational structure.

Evaluating every situation that occurs in the counselor-client relationship as creativity is impossible. However, creativity cannot be said to be a formative technique like other counseling techniques. Creativity can show itself sometimes by enriching and changing an existing technique or at other times by birthing a brand-new

idea and an accompanying intervention. Therefore, although encountering a purely creative experience is not be possible in the research findings, how creativity transforms into experience in the counselor's consciousness can be seen in research findings.

No research findings were seen in the literature that contradict the findings of this research in general terms. This is because the research theme has been concluded to remain mostly unexplored and the literature to be very weak in terms of this type of study. Increasing the number of quantitatively and qualitatively designed research is thought will make room for findings of different opinions in the discussions of upcoming research.

The fact that creativity appears in the context of a dialectical relationship is encouraging for psychological counselors who experience blockages. Having less experienced psychological counselors add their creativity skills to their technical work styles based on protocols will be an important gain in due course. For this reason, psychological counselors might enrich their creativity by developing themselves in their daily lives with tools outside their field such as art, nature, literature, and philosophy in addition to professional readings and education. The investments psychological counselors make in their creativity ultimately means that they are investing in their clients' creativity.

The participating psychological counselors were observed to have not participated in any training program that had directly enhanced their creativity during the training process. This finding suggests that most psychological counselors in the field often use their creativity without any creativity training. Programs that support psychological counselors' creativity with non-atheoretical/non-normative methods still being given little place in academic curricula leads us to the conclusion that psychological counselor creativity is an issue that is becoming more important day by day and one that needs more research.

This research contains some limitations. Although its qualitative design arrangement provides a wealth of data, its generalizability needs to be enhanced by structuring it with quantitative methods, mixed methods, and grounded designs. Many of the participating psychological counselors are individuals who have received or are receiving formal training in their fields and have 3-7 years of experience. Therefore, this research does not reflect the experiences of psychological counselors with less than 3 years of experience and who have no education other than undergraduate education. Conducting future studies with psychological counselors who are still at the beginning of their career as well as with those who are in the more advanced stages of their career with over 7 years of experience is considered important in order to overcome the existing limitations. Meanwhile, we know creativity often emerges in the counselor-client relationship. As such, this article also may serve as encouragement for future research to examine clients' roles in creativity and its repercussions on healing.

As result, major counseling theories reduce clients' subjective experiences to certain assumptions that sometimes cause their lived experience to be overlooked. A model starting from an unconventional experiential creativity experience may provide a simple therapeutic basis for the counseling process.

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