

Reconsideration of the Listening Skill Scale: Comparison of the Listening Skills of the Students of Psychological Counseling and Guidance in accordance with Various Variables

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Abstract

There are two main objectives of this study: The first is to reconsider the Listening Skill Scale and the second is to compare the levels of students of counseling and guidance according to the situations of whether they took the courses including the listening skills and to gender variable. In accordance with these objectives, the data obtained from 371 university students were primarily subjected to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. In addition, item-total score/point correlations of the scale were assessed and sub and upper point groups of 27% were compared with t-test. Cronbach Alpha reliability was calculated for the reliability of the scale. In accordance with the second objective the research, 528 students studying at psychological counseling and guidance undergraduate programs of several universities were reached. Two-factor variance analysis was used in the analyses of the data. It was found out that listening skill of the students of counseling and guidance did not differ according to whether they took the courses including this skill and it, on the other hand, showed significant difference according to gender variable.

Key Words

Listening Skill, Communication, Counseling Skills, Counselor Education.

Establishment and maintenance of good and effective relationships are possible with the establishment of a good communication among the individuals. The fundamental way of establishing a

good communication, on the other hand, is to be able to listen to the person you talk to effectively (Cihangir-Çankaya, 2011). According to De Vito (1995), on the other hand, the process of listening is circular. Reactions of someone have the characteristics of warning for the other and the other's reactions also bear the same characteristic for the other. De Vito explains listening with a series composed of total five stages as perceiving, understanding, recalling, evaluating and responding.

Listening skill, in literature, have been studied over several sample groups in some descriptive and experimental investigations. For example, Drollinger, Comer, and Warrington (2006) developed active empathic listening scale for the purpose of measuring the active empathic listening skills of those working in sales sector. In another study, the work-

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ers were trained for reflective listening education and effectiveness of this was examined (Rautalinko & Lisper, 2004). A study was conducted by Doveston (2007) to improve children's listening and social skills. Phillips (1999) analyzed effective listening skill within the context of mediation. In another research, listening attitudes of nurses were investigated within the framework of their relationships with their patients (Gilbert, 2004). In addition, there is an investigation in which effective listening skill was dealt within the facilitating factors in the process of decision-making within the framework of doctor-patient relationship (Rhonda et al., 2002). There are also studies where effective listening skill was discussed in marital relationship (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Hafen & Craneb, 2003; Pasupathi, Carstensen, Levenson, & Gottman, 1999). Apart from a study (Cihangir, 2000) aiming at improving only listening skill, listening skill was dealt with as a skill in some studies aimed at developing skill such as social skill training (Avcioglu, 2003; Sümer, 2005), empathic skill training (Yılmaz, 2003), conflict-solving training (Çoban, 2005) and communication skill (Çam, 1997).

Listening skill, as well as being one of the fundamental skills used in the interpersonal relationships in the daily life, is also one of the basic skills in the process of psychological consultation (Egan, 1994). As Gibson and Mitchell (1995) and Ivey and Ivey (1987) pointed out, counselors should well employ listening as an attitude in order to be able to understand what happened to their clients indeed and to help them. Eisenberg and Delaney (1993) emphasize that influential counselors establish an explicit, honest and supporting relationship with their clients, they establish a relationship with him/her based on respect by actively participating in the listening process and paying attention to his/her client and they try to understand not only the content of what they said but also their feelings, beliefs, opinions, sense of self and living conditions. Leibert (2011), in his/her research in which she/he examined the studies as regards the factors in the process of counseling, stated that effective listening, empathy and having respect for the clients are included within the context of the factor of establishing positive relationship with the client.

In the skill classification made by Ivey and Ivey (1987), the micro-skills necessary for the in-

struction of counselor were listed with a particular hierarchy. Listening skills are contained in the stage of exploring which is the first stage of three-step support/assistance skills model developed by Hill and O'Brian (1999) and where feelings, opinions and attitudes of the clients were put forth. In the developmental assistance model which Egan (1994) **proposed to establish** interpersonal relationships and to provide personal assistance service, on the other hand, there are four stages. Listening skills, in this model, are included in the way of listening to the client both as physical and as psychologically in the period of pre-communication. Finally, Carkhuff (2000), on the other hand, classified the psychological counseling skills as responding and personalisation and taking a step. Because the skills of responding to content, to emotion and to meaning are contained in the stage of responding, it can be said that listening skills are included in this stage. As well as these models, counseling skills are also categorized in the way of basic skills and advance level skills (Ivey & Ivey, 2003).

When the fields of competency that are needed to make counselors gain in the counselor education were examined (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009), it can be said that listening skills were dealt with within the scope of assistance skills and working fields with group. Besides, it was Rogers (1957; 1975) who first accentuated the notion of actively listening in the process of counseling, within the scope of counseling, which is not directive within the frame of client-centered approach. Considering the fact that counseling training is generally carried out within the frame of client-centered approach in our country (Mocan-Aydin, 2000), importance of the studies on the listening skills of the students of counseling and guidance or psychological counselors will conduct become much clearer. After all, there are limited number of investigations on the listening skills and counseling skills of the students of counseling or counselors.

Purpose

This study has two main objectives. These objectives are; (1) to examine the Listening Skill Scale developed by Kuzgun and Cihangir 2000 (as cited in Cihangir, 2000) and (2) to compare

the levels of listening skill of the students of psychological counseling and guidance according to whether they took the courses including listening skills and to the variable of gender. In line with the second objective of the research, the listening skills of the first-year students of counseling and guidance who did not take the courses including listening skills and the fourth-year students who took the courses including listening skills was examined.

Method

Research Design and Study Group

The studies intended for the second objective of the research were performed in accordance with the comparison model, which is one of the scanning models. Two different samples were examined in compliance with the objectives of the research and sampling model, which is easy to reach, was used in the selection of sample. In line with the first objective of the research, validity and reliability study of Listening Skill Scale was carried out with 371 university students.

In line with the second objective of the research, 528 students, who were 1st and 4th year students and were studying in the department of counseling and guidance of several universities, were reached to analyze the listening skills of the students who took and who did not take the courses aimed at developing listening/psychological counseling skills.

Instrument

Listening Skill Scale was first developed by Yıldız Kuzgun and Zeynep Cihangir (as cited in Cihangir, 2000). Item analysis of the scale was performed with the comparison of score averages of the groups of top-bottom 27% and with the calculation of item total correlations. Its correlation with the scores of Scale of Evaluating The Communication Skills (Korkut, 1997) was found to be .33. Cronbach Alpha value of the scale is .69, and the correlation coefficient found with the technique of test-half is, on the other hand, .67. The high score obtained from the scale shows that the level of listening skill rose (cited in Cihangir, 2000).

Procedure

Personal information that belongs to the students and which were obtained from the scale and from the questions asked in the personal data form denoted on the scale was entered to computer environment by coding and they were made ready for carrying out the statistical procedures.

Results

Reconsideration of Listening Skill Scale

In the study, Listening Skill Scale was primarily reconsidered for the purpose of reorganizing the scale items and carrying out studies regarding the structure validity of the scale. A test form of 20 items was created by adding 5 more items, in the light of literature, to the scale of three-point likert scale, composed of 15 items and aiming at determining individuals' skills of listening to others. Triple graduation included in the first form of the scale, on the other hand, was converted into five point likert scale to be able to better distinguish skill level. Test form of 20 items created was applied to 371 students studying at different departments of Ege University.

Results Regarding the Validity of Listening Skill Scale:

Exploratory Factor Analysis: First of all, exploratory factor analysis was made for the structure validity of the scale. Prior to this analysis, Barlett Sphericity test was checked with Kaiser Maier Olkin (KMO). KMO is a test intended for testing whether data structure in terms of sample size is suitable for factor analysis. KMO value demonstrates that data structure is perfect at .90s and very good at .80s. The fact that Chi-square test statistics derived with Barlett Sphericity Test proved to be significant is the indication that the data were due to the normal distribution of multivariate (Tavşancıl, 2006). In consequence of the analysis carried out, KMO value of the data set of the scale is .878 and Sphericity Test ($\chi^2=1515.865$ $p<0.01$) was found to be significant. It was seen that 20 items in the factor analysis were clustered in 3 dimensions after Varimax axis turning technique. 5 items were excluded from the scale in accordance with the criteria of the fact that factor loads were at least .30 (Merenda, 1997) and the .10 was between the factor load in the closest factor (Büyüköztürk, 2003; Tavşancıl, 2006). Test form of 20 items was turned into a form of 15 items. Fac-

tor analysis was remade over 15 items. It was observed that common variance of the factors over the each variable changed between .35 and .77. It was established that the scale produced 2 factors whose eigenvalues were bigger than 1. The first factor alone accounts for 23.66 of the total variance, and the second factor together for 44.28% of it. It was determined that the load values in the first factor of the items changed between .55-.73 and the load values in the second factor, on the other hand, 36-73.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: When compatibility statistics were examined, it was observed that χ^2 value 211.34 and this was considered as significant ($p < .00$). Of the compatibility values of the model, χ^2/sd ratio was calculated as 2.60. It can be said that this ratio was under the desired rate of 5:1 and model accorded at a good level. It is seen that RMSEA value is 0.06. Hair, Anderson, Tahtam, and Black (1995) state that the fact that RMSEA value is between .06 and .08 is acceptable for compatibility. This situation is an evidence that the tested model is suitable for the study group. Of the other indices, GFI and AGFI's being .90 and over reflects a perfect compatibility; for GFI, .85 and over, and AGFI .80 and over reflect the acceptable compatibility (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988; Sümer, 2000). Accordingly, it can be said that the model for the index of GFI and AGFI is excellent. It is pointed out that the fact that CFI is .90 and over shows a good compatibility, NNFI is .95 and over an excellent compatibility (Bentler & Bonnett, 1980; Hu & Bentler, 1999). In this study, on the other hand, CFI was found to be .96, and NFI .94. RMR value, which is one of the other scales used when examining the appropriateness of the model and which was indicated to be the indication of excellent compatibility was found to be .05 in this study. The findings obtained through the confirmatory factor analysis demonstrate that almost all of the compatibility indices have excellent compatibility values and the model is suitable for the data.

Results Concerning the Reliability of Listening Skill Scale: According to the application results performed to the group of total 371 people, effective listening sub-scale of the scale was found to be .82, noneffective listening sub-scale .77 and general for the scale .84. Coefficients of the calculated internal consistency show that reliability of the scale is at a high level.

Scoring of Listening Skill Scale: Thanks to the reconsideration of the scale, it was proved to be valid

and reliable. The scale is a two-dimensional scale formed of 15 items. Scoring in the scale is in the way of "1- never; 2 at times; 3- sometimes; 4- often; 5- always". The lowest score to be obtained in terms of listening skill scores is 15, the highest, on the other hand, 75. The more the scores obtained from the scale increase, the more the level of listening skill increases.

The Study of Listening Skill Scores of the Students of Psychological Counseling and Guidance in accordance with Whether They will Take the Lessons Involving This Skill and with the gender Variable

It has been found out that students' scores of listening skill significantly differ in accordance with sex ($F=22.231, p<.01$). The scores of listening skill have been found not to vary significantly according to whether they take the lesson involving this skill or not ($F=.338, p>.01$). It has been observed that the common effect of sex and the case of whether they take the lessons involving listening skills on their scores of listening skill was not significant.

Discussion

The findings obtained as a result of the applications made for the evaluation of psychometric features of Listening Skill Measure indicate that the measure is in a construction that can be used in determining the students' listening skills. When the Listening Skill Measure is considered to be the only measuring device to be used for assessing the listening skills in literature, it is thought that the provision of construction validity is an important contribution by examining the measure again through this research. Two factors construct of the scale which is made by negative-positive items can analyzed with the more specific methods (Multi-trait Multi-method strategy, Marsh, Scalas, & Nagengast, 2010) which will be made afterwards in the researches.

In view of the second objective of the research, the listening skills of psychological counseling and guidance students have been examined. It has been discovered that the listening skills of students vary in accordance with gender and listening skill levels of female students are higher. In a study made by Yaka (2005) on psychological counselors, female psychological counselors were found out to distinguish the effective or ineffective psychological

counselor reactions better than male psychological counselors. In the research made by Aydın (1999), it was found that the empathy skills of females in various occupational groups are higher than those of the males. In another study made by Ünal (1997), it was found that the empathic tendency levels of female students are significantly higher than male students.

As Day (2003) mentioned, the socialization periods of males differ from females. The fact that females and males regard the relations in different ways may affect the quality of their communication skills they use in relations. More participation in the relation, more wish and need to establish intimacy with other people may cause women to be more sensitive to what other people are experiencing. Because one of the basic requirements of effective listening is being sensitive to the experiences of the person opposite us and being wishful to understand him/her, this situation may differ the listening skills of female and male students. Besides this, the finding comes to mind that Kuebli, Butler, and Fivush (1995) mentioned more about the feeling of girls at the age of about five and they get more involved in the talks about feelings. This difference in the emotional communication periods of girls and boys may be affecting the listening skills of female and male students. The fact that mothers use less emotional words in their interaction with boys (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987), boys show more aggressive behavior than girls in socialization period, and they learn how to control their emotions instead of expressing (Brody, 1999) they may be shaping their communication attitudes. Besides these findings there are those which reveal that listening skill and empathic skill do not differ in accordance with gender (Köseoğlu, 1994; Tanrıdağ, 1992; Uslu, 2005)

In the research, it has been observed that the listening skill levels of counseling and guidance students do not vary according to whether they take the lessons involving listening skill or not, this variable and gender do not have any common effect on listening skill. This finding is not supported in literature. Ünal (1997) reached findings about the fact that empathic tendency levels increase parallel to the class level, taking lessons or trainings for gaining or developing counseling skills in other studies increases content- reflecting skills (Aladağ & Bektaş, 2007; Meydan, 2010; Rautalionko, Lisper, & Ekehammar, 2007) emotion-reflecting skills (Danish, D'Augelli, & Brock, 1976; Hill et al., 2008; Ivey, Normington, Miller, Morrill, & Haase, 1968;

Rautalionko et al., 2007), empathic skills (Bektaş & Aladağ, 2005; İkiz, 2006). There are also studies showing that receiving courses or education for skill development besides these findings do not cause any difference in skills (Aladağ & Bektaş 2007; Meydan, 2010; Yaka, 2005)

In short, to reveal that Listening Skill Measure is a valid and reliable device is considered to be one of the important contributions of the study. The changes of proficiency levels related to skills can be determined instead of their perception on skills by forming educational programs for developing their listening skills of psychological counseling and guidance students through the studies to be made from now on. Listening skill and the development of listening skill can be investigated in different respects by planning experimental studies on developing listening skills of different sampling groups (mother-father, teacher, child etc.)

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