

Using Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* to Enhance Psychological Mindedness in Future Counselors

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of a structured, literature-based intervention designed to enhance psychological mindedness among counselor candidates. *Psychological mindedness*, a core competency for mental health professionals, involves the capacity to understand one's own internal processes as well as those of others, yet empirical interventions targeting its development remain limited. To address this gap, an experimental book reading and discussion-based program grounded in Irvin D. Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* was implemented with undergraduate counseling students in Türkiye. Participants in the experimental group ($n = 20$) engaged in weekly reading and discussion sessions over 7 weeks, while the control group ($n = 20$) received no intervention. Psychological mindedness was assessed at pretest, posttest, and 45-day follow-up. Results indicated that the intervention

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significantly increased psychological mindedness in the experimental group and that these gains were maintained over time. The findings support literature-based experiential methods in counselor education as effective tools for fostering reflective professional competencies.

Keywords

counselor candidates, counselor training, experimental intervention, literature-based intervention, book-based intervention

Significance of the Scholarship to the Public

This study investigated the effectiveness of a structured, literature-based intervention using *When Nietzsche Wept* by Irvin D. Yalom in enhancing future counselors' self-understanding and capacity to comprehend others. Over a 7-week period, counselor candidates participated in guided discussions centered on the novel's rich psychological and philosophical themes. The results indicated a significant increase in participants' levels of psychological mindedness—a critical competency for establishing effective therapeutic relationships. These findings suggest that accessible methods, such as literature-based discussions, may serve as valuable tools in strengthening core professional skills among mental health practitioners, thereby contributing to improved quality of psychological services for the broader public.

When one begins to understand oneself, one is one step closer to understanding the world (Jung, 1965). *Psychological mindedness* is a multi-dimensional concept defined as the ability to understand both one's own internal processes and the motivations underlying the behavior of others (Appelbaum, 1973; Conte et al., 1996). This concept, which was first addressed within the framework of psychoanalytic theory, aims to increase the individual's inner awareness and develop the ability to make sense of the inner processes of other individuals (Boylan, 2006). Psychological mindedness supports individuals not only to make sense of their own feelings and thoughts, but also to establish healthier relationships with individuals in their social environment (Trudeau & Reich, 1995). Therefore, it is stated that individuals with high levels of psychological mindedness are more successful in empathizing, developing communication skills, and conflict resolution processes (Karyagina & Chumakova, 2018). Especially in individuals

providing mental health services, having a high level of this skill is seen as one of the main factors that increase the efficiency of the therapeutic process (Cogburn et al., 2022; Kılınç & Uzun, 2022). Awareness of clients' thoughts and feelings develops depending on the level of psychological mindedness of the therapists and this directly affects the effectiveness of the therapy (Daw & Joseph, 2010).

Moreover, psychological mindedness has been associated with several key elements of clinical acumen, including empathy, emotional attunement, reflective functioning, and counseling self-efficacy (Beitel et al., 2005; Daw & Joseph, 2010; Trudeau & Reich, 1995). These associations highlight the relevance of psychological mindedness not only as a personal trait but also as a trainable skill that underpins professional competence in counseling contexts (Farber, 1985; O'Brien, 2001). However, despite its recognized theoretical and practical significance (Daw & Joseph, 2010), psychological mindedness remains an underexplored construct in recent counselor education literature across both Western and non-Western contexts (Cogburn et al., 2022). In particular, in countries such as Türkiye, there is a notable absence of structured, curriculum-integrated interventions specifically aimed at developing psychological mindedness among counselor candidates (Kılınç & Uzun, 2022). Globally, the literature also reflects a scarcity of empirically validated pedagogical approaches designed to enhance this capacity in a deliberate and measurable way (Kumlu, 2022; Saito et al., 2017).

One critical issue is the notable absence of structured interventions specifically designed to enhance psychological mindedness in counselor training programs (Cogburn et al., 2022). Although experiential learning, supervision, and personal growth courses may indirectly foster this capacity, few empirical studies have systematically tested targeted interventions for its development (Kumlu, 2022; O'Brien, 2001; Saito et al., 2017). This gap highlights a compelling need for the design and evaluation of innovative, evidence-based practices aimed at nurturing psychological mindedness in future counselors. The present study seeks to address this need by implementing and assessing a literature-based group intervention as a structured method to enhance psychological mindedness among counselor candidates.

Previous research on psychological mindedness draws attention to the importance of this concept. The Psychological Mindedness Scale (PMS) developed by Conte et al. (1996) is one of the widely used scales to measure individuals' level of psychological mindedness. In addition, the Balanced Index of Psychological Mindedness (BIPM) developed by Nyklíček and Denollet (2009) is a comprehensive measurement tool that allows individuals to separately assess their level of interest and insight in understanding both themselves and others. Studies have found that individuals with high

levels of psychological mindedness develop higher levels of resilience, self-awareness, and empathic approach compared to those with low levels (Beitel et al., 2005; Daw & Joseph, 2010; Kılınç & Uzun, 2022). These capacities are central to effective counseling, as they contribute to establishing therapeutic alliance, navigating complex emotional material, and accurately interpreting clients' internal experiences (Daw & Joseph, 2010; Farber, 1985). In addition, it is emphasized that psychological mindedness is not only limited to self-awareness but also supports healthy communication in interpersonal relationships in the social context (Farber, 1985; O'Brien, 2001). Therefore, developing this skill in the professional training processes of psychological counselors and therapists is critical for professional success. Accordingly, the present study aimed to examine whether a structured, literature-based discussion intervention—centered on Irvin D. Yalom's (1992) *When Nietzsche Wept*—could enhance psychological mindedness among undergraduate counselor candidates.

Professional Importance of Psychological Mindedness

Psychological mindedness is considered as a critical professional skill, especially for counselors and therapists (Daw & Joseph, 2010; Westen et al., 1991). This skill is one of the main factors determining the quality of the therapeutic relationship (Farber, 1985). In the literature, it is frequently emphasized that counselors with high levels of psychological mindedness establish a stronger therapeutic bond with their clients and manage the process more efficiently (Del Campo Bartholomew & MacLean, 2022). Psychological mindedness provides not only an understanding of the client's problems, but also the ability to deeply comprehend the client's emotions and develop an empathic understanding (Daw & Joseph, 2010). Previous research shows that this skill facilitates clients' ability to express themselves clearly in the therapeutic process and accelerates the healing process of clients (Beitel et al., 2009; McCallum et al., 2003; Nyklíček et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be said that counselors with high levels of psychological mindedness may have an advantage in providing effective solutions by better understanding the emotional needs of their clients.

In the Turkish context, counselor education is primarily delivered at the undergraduate level within faculties of education, where training programs emphasize theoretical knowledge, fundamental helping skills, and supervised practical experience (Korkut & Mızıkacı, 2008; Ültanır, 2005). Although courses in interpersonal communication and personal development exist (Meydan, 2014), the construct of psychological mindedness is not explicitly addressed within the formal curriculum. Moreover, to date, there has been no

structured pedagogical intervention in Türkiye specifically aimed at enhancing psychological mindedness among counselor candidates. Although previous studies have examined related constructs such as psychological flexibility and rigidity (Aydoğdu & Karataş, 2025), emotional awareness (Gençtanırım-Kurt et al., 2015), empathy (Düşünceli et al., 2021; Yegen & Özdemir Bişkin, 2024), cultural sensitivity (Aydın & Şahin, 2017), resilience (Ateş & Sağar, 2022), and counseling self-efficacy (Bakalım et al., 2018; Bakioğlu & Türküm, 2019; Kılıç, 2025; Kılıç et al., 2022), none has empirically investigated psychological mindedness itself as a distinct and foundational professional competence. Therefore, the present study constitutes the first known effort to operationalize and empirically examine the development of psychological mindedness in Turkish counselor education.

The acquisition of psychological mindedness skills by counselor candidates during their undergraduate education is considered a basic requirement for professional preparation and success (Farber, 1985). Although this skill directly contributes to the development of professional competencies such as empathy, active listening, and appropriate intervention, it also enables candidates to exhibit a more conscious, sensitive, and effective approach in their professional lives (Daw & Joseph, 2010). Practical courses and supervision-supported studies in the education process provide an appropriate environment to develop this skill, making it possible to reinforce theoretical knowledge in practice (Farber, 1983). Within this framework, introducing structured psychological mindedness training into counselor education in Türkiye is not only timely but essential, as it offers a pathway for cultivating more reflective, emotionally attuned professionals. Moreover, psychological mindedness is critical not only for individual development but also for improving the quality of mental health services at the societal level (Cogburn et al., 2022; Dunsmuir-White, 2015). For this reason, integrating it into early education programs strengthens both the individual competencies of counselor candidates and improves the quality of services provided to the community (Daw & Joseph, 2010; Farber, 1985). In this study, the selection of students enrolled in the psychological counseling undergraduate program as participants is considered a meaningful intervention strategy, given that they will work directly with individuals in the future and will provide services in the field of mental health.

Book Reading Based Intervention: When Nietzsche Wept

In the literature, various training and intervention methods are used to develop psychological mindedness. These methods include individual or group-based

supervisions, psychoeducation programs, mindfulness-based practices, and experiential learning approaches (O'Brien, 2001; Saito et al., 2017). However, although book reading and discussion-based interventions are relatively less common in the literature, they offer a unique approach that allows individuals to understand both themselves and the individuals in their social environment more deeply (Kumlu, 2022). Book reading-based interventions are among the important tools for improving the individuals' imagination, empathic thinking capacity, and cognitive insight (Arslan et al., 2022). This method can support individuals' focus on their own internal processes while also enhancing their ability to understand others by making sense of the inner world of the characters they read.

The content and quality of the literary work selected for book reading-based interventions play a decisive role in the effectiveness of such programs. Irvin D. Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* is considered an ideal resource due to its unique combination of psychological insight, emotional depth, and philosophical reflection that closely mirrors many of the processes involved in therapeutic encounters (Yalom, 1992). The novel presents richly developed characters, complex inner conflicts, and interpersonal dynamics that resemble those experienced in real-life counseling sessions (Yalom et al., 2019). In particular, Yalom's exploration of the therapeutic relationship and his detailed portrayal of the characters' emotional and cognitive journeys contribute significantly to the development of empathy and psychological reflection. In addition, the novel's engaging portrayal of the historical development of psychology as a discipline may have inspired counselor candidates by sparking a deeper interest in their profession (Paulsson, 2017). Although this particular book has not been empirically tested as a tool for enhancing psychological mindedness, its thematic structure and content align well with the constructs of insight and interest targeted by the BIPM. Therefore, *When Nietzsche Wept* can also function as a practical tool to improve individuals' psychological mindedness.

There are many studies in the literature that support the effects of book reading-based interventions on individuals' making sense of both their own inner world and the inner processes of others (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Kidd et al., 2016; Pino & Mazza, 2016). Previous research has shown that such interventions are effective in increasing individuals' levels of empathy, insight, and awareness (Djikic et al., 2013; Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). The process of reading and discussing books allows participants to review not only the content they have read but also their own feelings and thoughts (Arslan et al., 2022). In this process, individuals are expected to begin to understand different ways of thinking by listening to the perspectives of others during the discussion, which is expected to increase the level of psychological

mindedness (Kumlu, 2022). It is thought that counselor candidates, especially those receiving undergraduate education, can improve their empathy and insight skills through such interventions based on reading books and become better equipped in terms of professional competence.

The Present Study

Psychological mindedness is accepted as a critical skill that develops individuals' ability to make sense of both their own internal processes and the emotions and behaviors of others (Appelbaum, 1973; Conte et al., 1996). However, when the literature is examined, it is seen that the number of intervention programs aimed at gaining this skill is quite limited (Abramowitz & Abramowitz, 1974; Cogburn et al., 2022). Most of the existing studies on enhancing psychological mindedness have focused on measuring this construct within therapeutic or educational contexts (Conte et al., 1996; Nyklíček & Denollet, 2009), and the lack of structured interventions directly targeting its development remains a notable gap (Daw & Joseph, 2010; Farber, 1985). In particular, intervention programs centered on reading and discussion have received limited theoretical and empirical attention (Kumlu, 2022), which underscores the need for innovative pedagogical approaches in counselor education.

This gap is even more pronounced in the Turkish context, where counselor education programs emphasize theoretical foundations and supervised practice, yet lack structured efforts to explicitly foster psychological mindedness (Korkut & Mızıkacı, 2008; Ültanır, 2005). Although interpersonal sensitivity and self-awareness are encouraged through experiential learning activities (Meydan, 2014), these are often insufficient to cultivate deeper reflective capacities in a consistent and measurable way. To date, no empirical study has systematically investigated how psychological mindedness can be developed among Turkish counselor candidates through intentional pedagogical methods. Thus, there is both a theoretical and cultural rationale for situating the present research within this underexplored educational setting.

In this study, a book reading and discussion-based intervention program developed around Irvin D. Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* was designed to address this need. The novel's rich psychological themes, complex interpersonal dynamics, and philosophical depth provide an ideal foundation for engaging students in reflective dialogue and perspective-taking. Therefore, the intervention was expected to offer a structured experience through which counselor candidates could explore their internal world while gaining deeper insight into the emotional and cognitive processes of others (Yalom, 1992).

By empirically evaluating this intervention, the present study makes a twofold contribution. First, it represents the initial attempt to operationalize and enhance psychological mindedness among Turkish counseling students, thus addressing a significant national gap. Second, it extends the broader literature on counselor education by demonstrating how literature-based experiential practices can be systematically integrated into training programs to support reflective competence. These findings will not only inform counselor preparation in Türkiye but also contribute to the international discourse on context-sensitive and narrative-informed pedagogical models.

This study was conducted using an experimental design with experimental and control groups. Within the scope of the study, a 7-week book reading and discussion-oriented intervention program was applied to the experimental group and the psychological mindedness levels of the participants were evaluated with pretest, posttest and follow-up test. The main hypothesis of the study applied with this design was that the counselor candidates in the experimental group who participated in the book reading and discussion-based intervention program would have higher levels of psychological mindedness in the posttest compared to the students in the control group. Moreover, as a result of the intervention program, it is expected that there will be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the students in the experimental group in favor of the posttest. In the control group, it is predicted that there will be no significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. In the follow-up test conducted to evaluate the long-term effects of the intervention program, it is expected that there will be no significant difference between the posttest and follow-up test scores of the experimental group, thus ensuring the permanence of the gains obtained. It is aimed that the findings obtained will contribute to the development of effective intervention programs for the education of counselor candidates.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted in the Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance of a state university located in a medium-sized city in the Aegean Region of Türkiye. Ninety-five counselor candidates (undergraduate students) studying at the 3rd grade level voluntarily participated in the study. In the Turkish higher education system, “third grade level” refers to the third year of undergraduate study, typically involving students aged 20 to 22 years. Third-year counselor candidates were intentionally selected for this study because they occupy an important developmental stage in counselor education. At this

point in their training, students are neither complete novices nor fully immersed in advanced practicum or clinical experience. Their moderate level of theoretical and practical exposure provides an optimal balance—being sufficiently informed to benefit from reflective interventions, yet open enough for such experiences to have a measurable impact. Therefore, targeting this group increased the likelihood of detecting meaningful change in psychological mindedness as a result of the intervention.

As part of their third-year coursework, all participants had previously received a brief introduction (approximately 2 hours) to existential therapy and Yalom's contributions within the Theories of Counseling course. However, this exposure was limited in depth and did not include prior knowledge of the novel *When Nietzsche Wept* used in the intervention. Importantly, none of the participants had been introduced to the construct of psychological mindedness prior to the study. Before starting the study, the researcher informed the students in the class about the purpose and procedure of the study and obtained their informed consent forms. In order to determine the participants in the experimental and control groups, the BIPM scale was administered, and 20 pairs of students with similar characteristics in terms of pretest scores, gender, and age were formed using the subject matching method. One member of each pair was randomly assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group. As a result, a total of 20 students, 12 females and eight males, were included in each group. The mean age of the participants in the experimental group was 21.50 ($SD = 1.15$), while the mean age of the participants in the control group was 21.40 ($SD = .94$).

A priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power to determine the minimum required sample size for detecting a statistically significant difference between two independent groups. Assuming a two-tailed independent samples *t* test with an alpha level of .05, a power of .80, and a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.80$) based on previous literature and preliminary observations, the analysis indicated that a total of 52 participants (26 per group) would be required. Due to time and resource constraints and the voluntary nature of participation, a total of 40 participants (20 in each group) were included in the study. Despite the slightly smaller sample size, the significant results and observed effect sizes suggest that the study retained sufficient statistical power.

The preanalyses revealed that the psychological mindedness levels of participants in the experimental and control groups did not show a significant difference at the beginning of the process (see Table 1). The fact that both groups were in the same academic environment and exposed to similar course content throughout the experimental process minimized the influence of any variable other than the book reading and discussion-oriented intervention

applied to the experimental group. Furthermore, there were no participants in either the experimental or control groups who withdrew or requested to leave the study during the intervention process.

Measures

Demographic Information Form. In order to obtain information about the personal characteristics of the counselor candidates, a demographic information form was created by the researcher in which gender and age information were asked.

BIPM. The BIPM was originally developed by Nyklíček and Denollet (2009) to assess individuals' levels of interest in and capacity for reflecting on their own psychological states and processes. The scale consists of 14 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not true*) to 4 (*very much true*). The BIPM evaluates psychological mindedness across two dimensions—insight into one's own mental and emotional processes, and interest in understanding those of others—which aligns with how the construct is operationalized in this study. Subscale scores range from 0 to 28, while total scores range from 0 to 54, with higher scores indicating higher levels of psychological mindedness. The Turkish adaptation of the BIPM was conducted by

Table 1. Comparison of Group Means for Pretest, Posttest, and Follow-Up Test Scores

	Experimental Group (n = 20)	Control Group (n = 20)				
Variables	<i>M</i> ± <i>SE</i>	<i>M</i> ± <i>SE</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Psychological mindedness						
Pretest	39.25 ± 7.44	39.35 ± 6.71	198.00	−.05	.96	.01
Posttest	45.90 ± 7.32	39.45 ± 6.70	102.50	−2.64	.01	.42
Follow-up test	45.50 ± 7.15	39.65 ± 6.63	108.50	−2.48	.01	.39
<i>z</i> (Pre x post test)	−3.95	−.29				
<i>p</i>	.00	.77				
<i>r</i>	.88	.05				
<i>z</i> (Post x follow-up test)	−1.54	−.87				
<i>p</i>	.12	.39				
<i>r</i>	.34	.19				

Note. U = Mann-Whitney U test; z = Wilcoxon signed-rank test; r = effect size.

Denizli et al. (2022) through a comprehensive cultural adaptation process that included forward and backward translation, expert review, and pilot testing. The adapted version was validated in a university student sample and showed psychometrically sound properties. Confirmatory factor analysis supported the original two-factor structure, $\chi^2/df = 3.11$, $p < .001$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .060, Standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) = .059, goodness of fit index (GFI) = .95, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .93, and comparative fit index (CFI) = .94, and internal consistency was high, with a McDonald's Omega (ω) = .85 for the total scale. These findings support the use of the BIPM as a valid and reliable instrument for measuring psychological mindedness in the Turkish cultural context. Sample items from the scale include: "[item-8] My feelings show me what I need." and "[item-10] I never think about what made me act in a certain way." (reverse item).

Procedure and Intervention

In this study, a structured process was followed to evaluate the effectiveness of a book reading and discussion-oriented intervention program to improve the psychological mindedness levels of counselor candidates (see Figure 1). Prior to the study, the purpose and process of the study were shared with third-year undergraduate students studying in the Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance at a state university in the Aegean Region of Türkiye, and students who volunteered to participate in the study were invited. Of the 99 students in the class, 95 volunteered to participate in the study and signed informed consent forms. The remaining 4 students did not want to participate in the study. Volunteer students who participated in the study were informed that they could leave the study at any time.

BIPM was administered to 95 volunteer students as a pretest measurement. Then, 20 pairs of subjects with similar characteristics in terms of pretest scores, gender and age variables were formed from these 95 volunteer students by using the subject pairing method and one of these pairs was randomly assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group. As a result, a total of 20 students, 12 females and 8 males, were included in each of the experimental and control groups. Statistical analyses revealed that there was no significant difference between the pretest scores of the experimental and control groups formed by pairing the subjects (see Table 1).

A 7-week intervention program based on Irvin D. Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* was applied to the experimental group. *When Nietzsche Wept* consists of a total of 22 chapters and an Author's Note section in addition to these chapters. The intervention program consisted of weekly book reading and

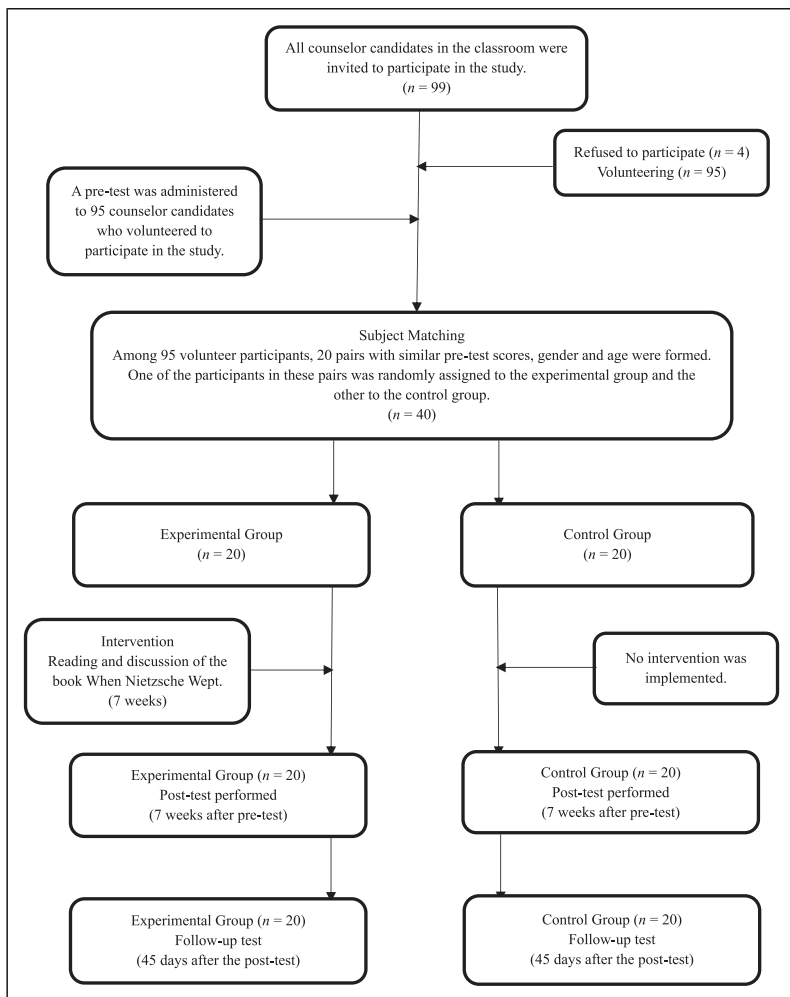


Figure 1. Flowchart of the process

discussion sessions. The novel was completed by reading four chapters in the first week, three chapters each during weeks 2–6, and three chapters and the Author's Note in the last week. In the weekly 2-hour discussion sessions, students analyzed the chapters they read, evaluated the inner worlds of the characters and participated in discussions that developed their empathy skills. The discussion sessions were held in a U-shaped classroom where there was

no group leader and 20 students could easily see each other. The researcher was only involved in the sessions to observe and to eliminate any possible irregularities. Although the sessions were not led by a facilitator, the researcher ensured consistency across discussions by providing structured prompts and by monitoring the sessions to support a focused, respectful, and reflective atmosphere.

In each weekly session, participants were encouraged to discuss the psychological and emotional dynamics of the characters and events in the assigned chapters. To structure the discussions and stimulate deeper reflection, the researcher prepared a set of guiding prompts for each session. Sample discussion questions included: "What internal conflict is the main character experiencing in this chapter?" "How does Breuer's emotional journey resemble challenges faced by counselors in real-life settings?" and "Did any part of the chapter resonate with your personal thoughts or feelings?" Although participants were free to elaborate beyond these prompts, the questions helped ensure consistency across sessions and facilitated meaningful dialogue. Across sessions, recurring themes included existential dilemmas, therapeutic boundary issues, fear of vulnerability, emotional repression, and the dual role of healer and sufferer. These themes not only reflected the content of the novel but also created opportunities for students to explore their own psychological processes and perspectives in relation to their future professional roles.

During this 7-week period, no intervention was applied to the control group. Participants in the control group continued to attend their regular coursework and academic activities as scheduled. These courses included standard curriculum components such as counseling theories, research methods, and supervised practicum. Importantly, none of the standard course content was specifically designed to target or enhance psychological mindedness. In addition, the fact that both groups were in the same academic environment and exposed to similar course content throughout the process minimized the effect of other variables.

After the completion of the 7-week intervention period, a posttest was administered to both groups. In order to evaluate the permanence of the intervention, a follow-up test was administered to both groups 45 days after the intervention was completed. This structured process allowed for a consistent evaluation of the short- and long-term effects of the book reading and discussion-focused intervention program on the psychological mindedness levels of counselor candidates. Although no formal manipulation check was conducted during the intervention, participants' attendance was monitored throughout the seven weeks. All participants in the experimental group attended at least six of the seven sessions, and the group discussions were consistently characterized by high levels of engagement and participation.

Notably, the sessions that some participants missed were neither the first nor the final session, which are often considered critical for engagement and continuity. These observations suggest that the intervention was implemented with fidelity and that the participants were meaningfully involved in the process.

All procedures followed the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki, its subsequent revisions, and similar ethical standards, as well as institutional or national research committee ethical requirements. In addition, the study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Uşak University, under decision number 2025-45. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. No form of compensation, academic credit, or material incentive was offered to participants for their involvement in the study.

Data Analyses

In the study, psychological mindedness scores of counselor candidates in the experimental ($n = 20$) and control ($n = 20$) groups were evaluated using pretest, posttest, and follow-up test measurements. All data were entered and analyzed using SPSS 22.0 software. To assess the normality of the data distribution, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. According to [Kline's \(2015\)](#) guidelines—values exceeding $|3|$ for skewness and $|10|$ for kurtosis—some variables fell outside the acceptable range, indicating violations of normality assumptions. Therefore, it was concluded that the data were not normally distributed. Moreover, the literature suggests that, particularly in studies with small sample sizes, the assumption of normality is often difficult to meet, and nonparametric statistical methods are generally recommended ([Büyükoztürk, 2014](#)). In line with this, nonparametric methods were used in the present analysis.

First, Mann-Whitney U test was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pretest scores of the participants assigned to the experimental and control groups. The results of the analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the psychological mindedness pretest scores of the experimental and control groups (see [Table 1](#)). This finding supports that the formation of the groups by pairing the subjects was successful and the differences that emerged at the end of the process were only due to the intervention focused on book reading and discussion.

After the 7-week intervention program was completed, the differences between the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups were again analyzed with the Mann-Whitney U test. In addition, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to compare the posttest scores of each group with their pretest

scores. The results of the follow-up test conducted 45 days after the completion of the intervention program were again analyzed with the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to evaluate the differences between the posttest and follow-up test scores of the experimental and control groups.

In nonparametric analyses, the formula suggested by Fritz et al. (2012), $r = z/\sqrt{N}$ (r = effect size; z = z value; N = number of observations), was used to evaluate the effect size. This formula is widely preferred especially in nonparametric statistics such as Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test with low number of observations. Effect size (r) values were interpreted as small when close to .10, medium when close to .30 and large when close to .50 (Cohen, 1988). All statistical analyses performed within the scope of the study were conducted using SPSS 22.0 program and the significance level was set at .05. Additionally, to reduce the risk of Type I errors due to multiple comparisons, a Bonferroni correction was applied. With two pairwise comparisons conducted (pretest to posttest and posttest to follow-up), the corrected alpha level was calculated as $.05/2 = .025$. The results remained statistically significant at this adjusted threshold, indicating that the observed effects are unlikely to be due to chance.

Results

The results obtained regarding the effectiveness of the intervention program implemented to increase the psychological mindedness levels of counselor candidates are presented in Table 1. When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that there is a statistically significant difference between the posttest psychological mindedness scores of the students in the experimental group who participated in the 7-week book reading and discussion focused intervention program and the students in the control group who did not participate in this program ($U = 102.50, p < .05$). When the averages in Figure 2 are analyzed, it is understood that the posttest psychological mindedness scores of the students in the experimental group were higher than those of the students in the control group. In addition, the effect size ($r = .42$) indicated in Table 1 shows that the intervention program had a moderate effect on the posttest psychological mindedness scores of the counselor candidates.

The analysis results presented in Table 1 show that there is a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest psychological mindedness scores of the counselor candidates in the experimental group who participated in the intervention program focused on reading and discussion ($z = -3.95, p < .05$). When the mean differences in Figure 2 are examined, it is seen that this difference is in favor of the posttest scores. This result reveals that the intervention program was effective in increasing the psychological

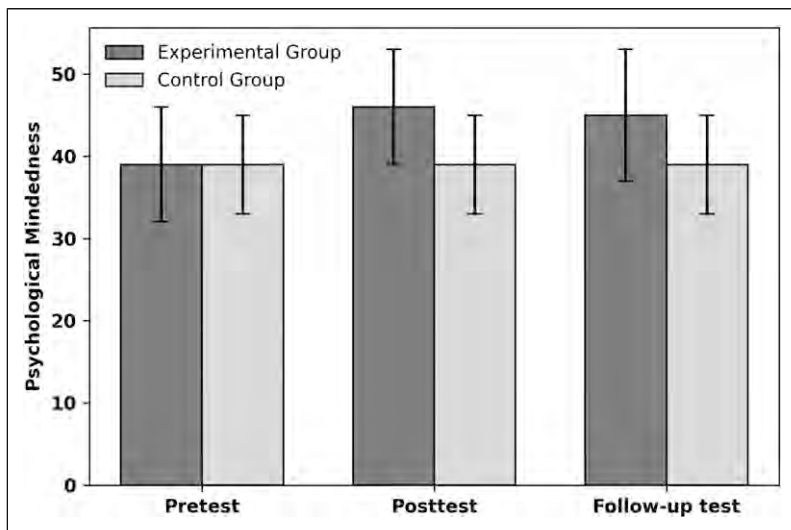


Figure 2. Changes in psychological mindedness in the process

Note. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean ($\pm$ SE)

mindedness levels of the counselor candidates. In addition, the effect size ($r = .88$) in Table 1 shows that the intervention program had a large effect on the pretest and posttest scores of the students in the experimental group.

In addition, the analysis results presented in Table 1 show that there was no statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest psychological mindedness scores of the counselor candidates in the control group ($z = -.29, p > .05$). No change was observed in the psychological mindedness levels of the students in the control group who did not participate in the intervention program focused on reading and discussion at the end of the process (see Figure 2). This result reveals that the psychological mindedness levels of the students who did not participate in the intervention program did not change during the process and remained stable.

In addition to all these results, when the analysis results presented in Table 1 are examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the posttest and follow-up test measurements of the counselor candidates in the experimental group ($z = -1.52, p > .05$). This shows that the improvement that the students who participated in the intervention program focused on book reading and discussion achieved immediately after the intervention continued 45 days after the end of the intervention (see Figure 2). This result reveals that

the effect of the intervention process on the psychological mindedness levels was permanent and that the students were able to maintain the positive change they gained in the long term.

Finally, the analysis results presented in Table 1 show that there was no significant difference between the posttest and follow-up test scores of the counselor candidates in the control group ($z = -.87, p > .05$). There was no statistically significant change in the psychological mindedness scores of the students in the control group, who were not subjected to any intervention during the process, between the posttest conducted immediately after the intervention and the follow-up test conducted 45 days later (see Figure 2). This result shows that the students in the control group, who did not participate in the intervention program focused on reading and discussion, did not show any improvement in their psychological mindedness levels 45 days after the experimental procedure.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a book reading and discussion-based intervention program based on Irvin D. Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* to increase counselor candidates' psychological mindedness levels. The results show that the intervention program was successful in achieving this goal. In this section, the results of the study will be discussed in the light of the literature and the theoretical and practical implications of the results will be addressed.

The findings show that the posttest psychological mindedness scores of the participants in the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group. This result shows that structured group discussions can increase individuals' capacity to understand their inner processes and develop their interest in psychological issues. This may be due to the deep character analysis and rich content on psychodynamic processes in Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* (Yalom, 1992). In particular, it can be said that the discussions on the emotional and cognitive processes of the characters in the book enabled the participants to both recognize their own inner experiences and understand the inner worlds of others (Yalom et al., 2019). In addition, the fact that the book presents the development process of psychology in a historically interesting way may have excited counselor candidates about their profession (Paulsson, 2017). It is consistent with previous studies that such structured experiences increase an individual's capacity to gain interest and insight (Kumlu, 2022; O'Brien, 2001; Saito et al., 2017).

Another reason for the significantly higher results in the experimental group may be that group discussions provide an interaction environment based

on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Group discussions supported the participants' ability to empathize and understand different perspectives by allowing them to evaluate not only their own thoughts but also the opinions and comments of other participants (Bayrakçı, 2007). Some previous studies have similarly shown that interactions provided through group dynamics increase individuals' social cognitive skills (Horan et al., 2011; Sertelin-Mercan & Yavuzer, 2017). This explains one of the potential mechanisms behind the increase in psychological mindedness observed in this study.

Building on social learning theory, the book-based discussions in this study offered a distinctive structure that went beyond typical classroom dialogue. Participants were not merely exchanging opinions, but actively modeling introspection, empathy, and emotional processing by engaging with psychologically rich content. Each session was scaffolded with guiding prompts, which helped focus attention on characters' internal conflicts and participants' own responses to these dynamics. This modeling and mutual interpretation process likely activated mechanisms such as vicarious learning, self-reflection, and perspective-taking core components of social learning (Bandura, 1977). Unlike traditional academic discussions in counselor education, which often revolve around theoretical constructs or case analysis, the sessions in this intervention were deliberately designed to cultivate psychological mindedness through personal reflection and shared meaning-making. This pedagogical format may explain the unique effectiveness of the intervention compared to typical seminar-style discourse.

In addition to the significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, the results of the follow-up test showed that the gains obtained in the experimental group were maintained after 45 days, which provides important clues about the long-term effects of such interventions. The sustainable effect of the intervention program suggests that the book reading and discussion processes created a permanent change in individuals' mental schemas. The development of individuals' psychological mindedness can be made permanent through cognitive practices applied in both daily life and professional relationships (Farber, 1985; Saito et al., 2017). Similarly, studies on experiential learning models suggest that such in-depth learning processes can lead to lasting cognitive and emotional changes (Kolb, 1984). In this context, the results emphasize the importance of integrating similar structured book reading and discussion-based interventions into counselor education programs.

The fact that there was no significant difference between the pretest, posttest, and follow-up test results in the control group indicates that complex cognitive skills such as psychological mindedness do not develop spontaneously through passive learning processes. The lack of change in the control

group across all three time points supports the conclusion that the observed improvements in the experimental group were not due to natural development, maturation, or academic exposure, but rather to the structured book-based intervention. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that both groups were in the same academic environment and exposed to similar course content throughout the process, with the only difference being the intervention implemented in the experimental group. As highlighted in the literature, guided and structured learning environments are essential for the development of higher-order psychological skills such as insight and reflective thinking (Cogburn et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge potential confounding variables that may have contributed to the observed improvements in the experimental group. Although the study design aimed to isolate the effect of the intervention, factors such as the novelty of participating in a structured group, the interpersonal engagement fostered by weekly sessions, or expectancy effects might have also played a role. Although the control group was exposed to the same educational setting, the additional group-based activity in the experimental condition may have offered psychological benefits beyond the literary content itself. Future studies employing dismantling designs or additional control conditions—such as nonliterature-based group discussions—could help clarify the unique contributions of each intervention component. Taken together, these findings suggest that current education programs should be enriched with targeted, structured interventions that actively engage students rather than relying solely on passive knowledge transfer.

Limitations and Implications

Although the results obtained in this study offer important contributions, some limitations should be taken into consideration. First, the sample used in the study was limited to counselor candidates from a single university in a predominantly collectivist culture—Türkiye. This cultural and institutional context may have influenced participants' receptivity and engagement with emotionally and relationally focused discussions, as interpersonal sensitivity and social harmony are culturally emphasized. Such cultural factors could limit the generalizability of the findings. In more individualistic societies, or in cultures with different dominant religious or philosophical traditions, the existential themes highlighted in Yalom's novel and the reflective demands of the intervention may be perceived differently. Therefore, while the theoretical framework of the intervention may possess cross-cultural relevance, its practical implementation might require cultural adaptations in future replications. Future research conducted in diverse universities and with

participants from varied demographic and cultural backgrounds—including both collectivist and individualist cultures—could help assess the transferability and broader applicability of these findings.

Secondly, the intervention program in this study was limited to a duration of seven weeks. Although the follow-up data indicated sustained improvements in psychological mindedness, no formal data were collected on whether participants continued to engage with the novel's themes after the intervention period concluded. As such, future studies might benefit from examining whether ongoing reflection or informal postintervention processing contributes to the long-term maintenance of gains. Although the follow-up test conducted 45 days after the intervention indicated sustained improvements, future studies are encouraged to conduct follow-up assessments over longer time periods to better evaluate the long-term stability of psychological mindedness gains. Moreover, the current intervention was based solely on book reading and discussion. Comparative studies incorporating diverse content—such as alternative literary works, films, or artistic activities—may offer valuable insights into the relative effectiveness of different formats in fostering psychological mindedness.

Another limitation of the experimental design is that only self-report data were collected. The fact that psychological mindedness is a multidimensional concept requires the use of different data collection tools. In future studies, more objective results can be obtained by using different data sources such as behavioral observations and interview analyses. Additionally, the relatively small sample size ($N = 40$) may limit the statistical power of the findings. Although an *a priori* power analysis was conducted and the observed effects were statistically significant, future studies with larger samples would help increase the robustness and generalizability of the results. In light of these limitations, future research should also examine the long-term impact of similar interventions on various professional competencies and explore how cultural variables shape the development of psychological mindedness. Comparative and longitudinal studies may help establish more robust causal links and expand the applicability of such interventions across diverse educational and clinical settings. Additionally, future research should investigate whether observed gains in psychological mindedness are sustained and effectively transferred to real-world counseling practices. Exploring the practical implications of psychological mindedness improvements in clinical settings over extended periods would enhance the applied value of such interventions.

Researchers who want to work in this field are recommended to design intervention programs that include different literary genres, works of art or experiential learning methods. In addition, studies examining the impact of

psychological mindedness development on individual differences (e.g. personality traits, emotional intelligence) will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this concept. Longitudinal studies with longer follow-up periods may provide more precise results on the permanence of intervention programs. In terms of implications for research, the findings of this study suggest a promising direction for interdisciplinary interventions that bridge psychology, literature, and education. This opens new research avenues into how symbolic and narrative tools can support the formation of reflective and empathic competencies among mental health professionals.

Mental health professionals are recommended to use book reading and discussion-oriented interventions to develop psychological mindedness skills in order for both themselves and their clients to benefit more from the therapy processes. The use of such methods, especially in supervision processes, may contribute to counselor candidates' better understanding of themselves and their awareness of their clients' internal processes. With regard to implications for practice, this study supports the integration of narrative-based group discussions into counselor training and clinical supervision. Such interventions may improve therapists' insight into client experiences and enrich the therapeutic relationship through increased empathic attunement and emotional awareness.

Supporting training programs with structured, literature-based interventions can enhance counselor candidates' professional competencies. This study demonstrates the value of supplementing traditional theoretical instruction with experiential modules that foster self-reflection, insight, and interpersonal sensitivity. Embedding such approaches into counselor education curricula may significantly improve students' psychological preparedness for professional practice. In light of the findings, counselor education programs might consider integrating literature-based discussion groups as a means of fostering psychological mindedness. Although this study utilized a philosophical novel, other genres—such as memoirs, clinical case studies, or contemporary fiction with rich emotional and interpersonal themes—may also be effective, depending on the developmental level of students. Future research is needed to compare the relative efficacy of these genres in eliciting insight and reflective engagement.

Although this intervention was student-led with no formal facilitator, the use of structured prompts helped ensure productive dialogue; therefore, both instructor-led and peer-facilitated formats may be viable depending on program objectives and available resources. Regarding feasibility, the voluntary nature of participation might raise concerns about recruitment in different institutional contexts. However, in this study, participation rates were high and no significant barriers were encountered, suggesting that students are

generally receptive to such interventions when aligned with their professional development. Institutions aiming to adopt similar approaches may consider embedding them into practicum seminars or supervision courses to maximize relevance and impact. Finally, it is recommended that organizations responsible for educational policy support the implementation of such structured interventions and allocate resources for their dissemination. Universities may also consider organizing in-service training programs for instructors to enhance the reach and sustainability of these practices.

From an advocacy perspective, the findings underline the importance of institutional and policy-level support for the development of emotionally and cognitively competent mental health professionals. Promoting such reflective practices at the systemic level may contribute to more humane, empathetic, and culturally sensitive mental health services in the long term. Such policy changes will contribute to the training of more competent and equipped mental health professionals in the future.

In conclusion, this study provided an innovative and evidence-based approach in the education of counselor candidates and constituted an important resource for developing new strategies for educational processes. By demonstrating that a structured, literature-based group intervention can significantly enhance psychological mindedness, the study highlights the potential of integrating experiential, narrative-centered methods into counselor training programs. These findings underscore the importance of designing training practices that not only convey theoretical knowledge but also foster self-reflection, emotional awareness, and empathy—core qualities in effective mental health professionals. Ultimately, we hope this research encourages counselor educators, policymakers, and practitioners to reconsider the role of interdisciplinary and creative tools—such as fiction and facilitated discussion—in shaping the personal and professional growth of future counselors. It is thought that future studies in this field will contribute to both academic and applied psychology by expanding the scope of intervention programs.

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