METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES OF PROSPECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELORS IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL GUIDANCE PRACTICES

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Abstract

This study aimed to improve and uncover the metacognitive skills of fourth-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Psychological Counseling and Guidance program during their internship as part of the "Guidance and Psychological Counseling Practice (GPC) in Schools I" course. Conducted in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year at a Turkish education faculty, the research involved 12 prospective teacher counselors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews held after 12 synchronous online sessions designed to foster reflective thinking and self-evaluation. These sessions encouraged students to share their internship experiences in schools, aiming to enhance their metacognitive awareness and critical thinking skills. Students were tasked with observing school environments, fulfilling responsibilities, and preparing detailed reports aligned with the Ministry of National Education's criteria. The course guide, developed by the GPC department, was shared with both students and counselor teachers at schools and explained comprehensively at the semester's start. Six students interned at primary schools with low socio-economic levels, while the other six interned at high schools with middle socio-economic levels, spending at least half a day weekly at their practice schools. The findings emphasize the importance of structured tasks and reflective practices in improving metacognitive skills among prospective psychological counselors.

Keywords: Metacognition, school guidance practices, psychological counseling, reflective thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Having conscious awareness has an important effect on an individual's ability to lead a successful and happy life, to cope effectively with the problems s/he encounters, and to be content with life (Güven, 2019). A review study by Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1990) stated metacognition to be a most powerful predictor of learning (cited by Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters & Afflerbach). Since metacognition has an important place in successful learning, it is noteworthy to examine metacognitive activity and improvement to determine how students can be taught to refer to metacognitive control. Flavell (1979) stated that metacognitive control includes monitoring, self-regulation and planning processes. Those who diligently observe and evaluate their performance, work to achieve good results by maintaining strategies and changing them as necessary (Hartman, 2001). Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986), for success in learning, propose six strategies involving asking questions, planning, monitoring, controlling, making corrections and self-testing. Metacognition is beyond thinking, and with an active awareness, a person has knowledge about his/her own thinking processes (Burke, 2007). Turner (1989) points out that, if students cannot be active and autonomous learnes, this probably results from the insufficiency of their metacognitive awareness and strategies. Nelson and Narens (1994) expresses that "Metacognition is a bridge between areas, e.g., between decision making and memory, between learning and motivation, and between learning and cognitive development." Vandergrift (2005) underlines that metacognitive strategies are affected by learners' motivation levels. Metacognitive thinking processes and strategies can also be predicted to be effective on motivation. According to Bandura (1991), if people cannot pay enough attention to their own performance, the conditions under which the performance takes place and to their immediate and

long-term effects, they cannot influence their motivations and their actions for the better. He also advocates that success in self-regulation depends in part on commitment, consistency and self-monitoring. Phakiti (2003) notes that metacognition encompasses active self-monitoring, self-regulation and organizing cognitive processes. Zimmerman (1998) conceptualizes self-regulation in three phases: Pre-cognition, performance control and self-reflection. *Pre-cognition phase* precedes performance and it has a role in the process of setting goal for action. The *performance control phase* is the process that occurs during learning and processes such as social comparison, feedback, use of strategies affect attention and action. In the *self-reflection phase* that takes place after the performance, learners evaluate their efforts through monitoring their improvement about goals and organizing strategies. Taking this explanation as reference, it can be grasped that self-regulation is related to metacognitive thinking processes. Halpern (1998) states that when thinking critically, students should monitor their own thinking processes through making decisions about time and endeavour they made, ensuring accuracy and through checking for their goal-directed improvement. He also relates effectiveness of self-feedback with learners' metacognitive monitoring skills. Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters & Afflerbach (2006) reports that with reference to the literature, three basic elements are valued for successful metacognitive instruction: a) integrating content with metacognitive instruction b) Informing students about the usefulness of metacognitive activities to encourage them to make an effort and c) long-term training to ensure the handily and well-conducted implementation of metacognitive activity. Magno (2010) remarks that increase of knowledge can be attributed to critical thinking and the process of organizing knowledge can be a metacognitive factor. We should not consider this comment merely as an increase in theoretical knowledge. Practical experience are also an important factor in knowledge growth. For this reason, practices performed with metacognition both provide knowledge base and offer important gains in terms of experience. Within the scope of "GPC (Guiance and Psychological Counseling Practice) in Schools I" course, it is of paramount importance that all the experiences of the Prospective Psychological Counselors are in harmony with their metacognitive thinking processes, to increase their professional awareness and to evaluate and know themselves better.

Improving the professional competencies of prospective teachers in the field of guidance and psychological counseling is not limited to acquiring technical knowledge and skills. This process also includes metacognitive awareness, which encompasses the ability to recognize, evaluate, and regulate one's own cognitive processes. Metacognition is a critical component that enables individuals to manage their learning processes more effectively, enhance problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and address professional challenges. The literature suggests that metacognition is a teachable construct and plays a significant role in professional development within the field of guidance and psychological counseling (Schraw, 2001). In this context, the aspects of metacognition that contribute to professional development, its applications in educational processes, and its impact on individual awareness should be thoroughly examined from various perspectives. Metacognitive awareness is a fundamental factor in improving the professional competencies of prospective teachers in the field of guidance and psychological counseling. Schraw (2001) states that metacognitive awareness is multidimensional, teachable, and domain-general, and he proposes four strategies to develop this awareness: promoting general awareness, fostering self-knowledge and regulatory skills, and creating appropriate learning environments. These strategies enable prospective teachers to improve self-directed learning skills during their professional development processes. Just as the professional development of prospective teachers in the field of guidance and psychological counseling is expected to progress with the increase in metacognitive awareness, it is also reasonable and logical to expect the various tasks they perform during teaching practice to have an impact on their professional and metacognitive development. Moreover, strategies to enhance this positive impact should be considered. Lambie and Sias (2009) emphasized that improving psychological maturity and metacognitive skills through supervision increases school counselors' professional competencies. In supervision processes, metacognitive awareness enables prospective psychological counselors to effectively manage complex situations and develop essential counseling skills such as empathy.

Similarly, a meta-analysis conducted by Carter (2019) revealed that effective clinical supervision plays a critical role in professional development and adherence to ethical standards. Based on these findings, Schraw (2001) highlighted the importance of external conditions and the quality of other relevant actors in the context of suitable learning environments, including supervision, for tasks that learners need to perform for their development. Peace and Sprinthall (1998) underscored the necessity of training experienced school counselors to effectively supervise novice counselors and proposed an in-service training program focused on development rather than evaluation. Their study drew attention to the shortcomings in existing supervision practices, noting that these deficiencies arise from the rarity of clinical supervision provided by trained colleagues and the limited impact of graduate-level supervision training. Additionally, the study concluded that increasing national interest and expectations for educational quality have made school counselors' roles more complex, necessitating the development of systematic in-service programs. In this regard, providing appropriate educational environments and training programs is critically important as it offers a solid foundation for prospective psychological counselors in terms of cognitive preparedness. Balashov, Pasichnyk, and Kalamazh (2022) designed an educational program aimed at developing students' metacognitive monitoring and self-regulated learning skills. The program sought to enhance students' abilities to set learning goals, control cognitive activities, and use metacognitive strategies. Reflection, intrinsic motivation, and the development of metacognitive skills were among the program's core objectives. Their study emphasized the impact of metacognitive monitoring on learning effectiveness and academic achievement. Granello (2002) examined the cognitive development of counseling students throughout educational programs and found a linear trend in this development as the program progressed. Furthermore, Granello (2010) stated that cognitive complexity is linked to positive counseling outcomes such as flexibility, empathy, and effectiveness. In this context, it can be said that improving prospective teachers' metacognitive awareness enables them to better manage their learning processes and make greater strides in acquiring the empathy and flexibility required for counseling. As they manage their own learning processes effectively, they can create mental space to view the external world with greater awareness and psychological well-being, positively influencing their professional development.

Harris (2010) conducted a study on a sample of 97 graduate students enrolled in a counseling program. Participants' psychological well-being was measured using the Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB), while their perceived wellness was assessed using the Perceived Wellness Survey (PWS). The study examined the relationship between graduate-level counseling students' psychological well-being and perceived wellness, revealing a significant correlation between these two factors. These findings have important implications for counselors' development and self-care processes. The study emphasized that incorporating self-assessment tools into counselor education programs can help maximize students' psychological functionality, which in turn has positive social change effects by enabling better therapeutic care for future clients. Kandemir (2021) found that attachment styles and self-regulation skills significantly predict therapeutic alliance skills among prospective psychological counselors. These findings highlight the importance of focusing on self-regulation skills during prospective teachers' educational processes. Specifically, reducing the negative impact of avoidant attachment styles and enhancing self-regulation skills can contribute to strengthening therapeutic alliance skills. Self-regulation skills also encompass metacognitive skills. For an individual's self-regulated behaviors to gain consistency and continuity, the individual must plan, monitor, and evaluate their tasks and learning processes with metacognitive awareness. Effective self-evaluation by learners is one of the central elements of metacognition and enables effective self-reflection. Hulbig (2018), in a study addressing the use of metacognition in education, emphasized that self-reflection is a central component of education. Lee, Youn, and Kim (2015) examined the professional development experiences of undergraduate students in psychological counseling through reflective journal writing. The study involved six students who completed a counseling skills course, and their weekly reflective journals were analyzed using qualitative techniques. The analysis revealed categories such as increased awareness and knowledge about counseling, struggles and frustrations

stemming from inexperience in counseling, and efforts to overcome these frustrations to become professional counselors. The study highlighted the professional development processes of undergraduate psychological counseling students and emphasized that these findings could be used to improve future counseling education programs. It can be said that task variety plays an important role in developing prospective teachers' metacognitive awareness, whether individually or in groups. Scandurra et al. (2018) found that group psychodynamic counseling enhances the metacognitive skills of senior clinical psychology students and that these developments are sustainable. This finding, being relevant to psychological counseling, is worth considering for drawing implications for prospective teachers in the field of guidance and psychological counseling. Group work can help prospective teachers in this field recognize emotional states, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and improve critical thinking skills. In this context, the importance of group dynamics-based applications in educational environments becomes more apparent. Metacognition also plays a significant role in developing critical thinking skills. Rivas, Saiz, and Ossa (2022) found that improving metacognitive skills through problem-based learning enhances critical thinking skills. Their research demonstrated a bidirectional relationship between metacognition and critical thinking, where improvement in one area leads to advancements in the other. Redding (1990) emphasized that metacognitive training can improve decision-making, problem-solving, and attention skills. These skills are critical for the professional practices of prospective teachers in the field of guidance and psychological counseling. Additionally, González (2007) highlighted the importance of metacognitive strategies in acquiring professional competencies and stated that individuals must control their own learning processes. Professional competencies are approached from a metacognitive perspective, emphasizing the individual's ability to reflect on and think about their own learning and cognitive processes. González stressed the importance of identifying needs for developing these competencies. In professional development and 21st-century skills, being a global citizen is also considered a valued characteristic. In this context, possessing and aiming for intercultural awareness and competence is essential. Metacognitive processes and multicultural competence are emphasized as important elements for culturally appropriate career counseling (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006). The researchers critiqued career counseling models and proposed an extended model incorporating metacognition to address cultural factors. They also highlighted the importance of enhancing counselors' multicultural competencies and stated that these competencies should be developed in career counseling practices. In this regard, improving the multicultural competencies of prospective teachers in the field of guidance and psychological counseling, along with fostering their metacognitive awareness, can enable them to provide more effective and culturally appropriate counseling services in diverse contexts. Strengthening both multicultural competence and metacognitive skills not only enhances their ability to adapt to complex situations but also facilitates their achievement of global professional standards.

González (2007) emphasized the importance of metacognitive strategies in acquiring professional competencies, focusing on the self-directed learning approach. Professional competencies are addressed from a metacognitive perspective, emphasizing the individual's ability to reflect on and think about their own learning and cognitive processes. González stressed the importance of identifying needs to improve these competencies. According to Bandura (1994), a strong sense of productivity enhances human achievement and personal well-being in many ways, and people who are confident in their abilities view difficult tasks as challenges to be undertaken rather than as threats to be avoided. It is important to examine the strategies and approaches that future psychological counselors follow in terms of metacognition to provide them with the highest efficiency during their internship periods within the scope of "Guiance and Psychological Counseling Practice (GPC) in Schools I" course. If students have self-management skills, they can determine metacognitive strategies more effectively, and this can increase their performance and enable them to be productive. In this respect, it was aimed in this study to establish a connection between students' affective characteristics such as motivation and anxiety, their efforts and the metacognitive strategies they used and and the obtained data were analyzed in this direction and the results were discussed by referring

to the relevant studies in the literature. In this study it is aimed to help fourth grade education faculty students of psychological counselling and guidance undergraduate programme improve their metacognitive skills in the process of GPC (Guiance and Psychological Counseling Practice) in Schools.

The tasks that the students who take this course should accomplish in line with the aspects mentioned above are explained as follows:

Tasks included 7 compulsory studies and 1 elective alternative study.

a) Compulsory Studies

1. Observation, Review and Weekly Evaluation of School Counseling Services and Preparation of Reports (12 Reports in total)
2. Legislation and E-Guidance Module Review / Evaluation Studies
3. Individual Recognition Techniques Practise Studies
4. Classroom Counseling Activity Practise
5. Creative Board/Panel and Brochure Preparation Studies
6. Counseling and Research Center Visit
7. General Evaluation

b) Optional Alternative Studies

In addition to the compulsory studies described above, students are expected to complete at least 1 alternative study included in the guide.

All reports of students were received from a classroom account created on the internet. Thus, the students saw the deadline for each task and uploaded their reports to the class portal in accordance with these dates.

Within the scope of the course students also instructed about the terms which are metacognition, self-regulation, critical thinking, endeavor, motivation and anxiety. The importance of these concepts in terms of the tasks they will achieve during the course and their contribution to them were explained to the students. Students were expected to share their views and experiences within the framework of these concepts in the synchronous lessons. They were also expected to write weekly reports related to their guidance practices at schools by focusing on these concepts mentioned.

Synchronous courses were conducted within the framework of the following basic questions:

Do you make any planning to ensure that the practices in the school are efficient and that your reports are well prepared?
To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.
*Which ways do you prefer when planning?
*Detailed examination of the guide prepared by the GPC Department
*Creating her own work plan, paying attention to the dates in the guide for the tasks
*Communicating with friends in group work tasks
*Explaining how s/he made a plan for the tasks (It can be explained in class, it can be written in weekly reports.)
*Explaining the role of interactions with individuals/friends in the practice school in the planning process
*Explaining the issues that affect at least one aspect of the work plan related to the tasks in the process. (The role of the student's own attitudes or environmental influences can be described in weekly reports and lessons.)
* If they only have in mind their personal plans for the tasks covered in the course, explaining how they plan
*If they create written and/or charted personal plans (daily, weekly etc.), explaining this planning process in weekly reports and lessons.

How do you regard your own proficiency levels /your own strengths and weaknesses in terms of practice tasks at school?

To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.

*Talking about her/his attitude towards herself/himself and the profession at the stage before starting the internship period at the practice school

* Talking about their observations and evaluations about their attitude changes after they started internship period at the practice school

* Commenting on their positive or negative traits

* Thinking about how the characteristics that they regard as positive contribute to them and what side gains these features bring to them.

* Thinking about the sub-reasons of the characteristics which can be improved. Making self-criticism when necessary.

* Thinking about whether they are successful enough in knowing themselves in situations/tasks that they need to overcome.

*Considering the degree of willingness to follow different and functional strategies and/or to work creatively in order to be successful in the tasks in the internship guide.

Do you think about the aspects that you think are weak or improvable, and and what ways do you follow to improve them?

To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.

*Self-evaluation of all aspects of the profession

*Explaining the role of acquired awareness in improving the individual characteristics

*Thinking about the personal or external factors/personal strategies/behaviors, etc., that lead to gain *awareness

*Giving examples from their own experiences/ telling memories, stories while thinking about the above issues

Which situations did you observe in practice school? Are your expectations consistent with the situations you observe? Please explain.

To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.

*Comparing the observations/tasks etc. made at the practice school with the relevant information he gained during his 4-year undergraduate education, looking at the situations with a critical view, making an inference on the extent to which the theoretical knowledge can be applied to the practice.

*Thinking and explaining the differences between their observations and experiences and their own expectations during the internship process, being aware of existing problems, thinking about solutions, communicating with other people, being willing to make short/long-term plans.

*Giving examples from their own experiences/ telling memories, stories while thinking about the above issues

How did the responsibilities/s you took affect your anxiety?

To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.

*Reflecting on how responsibilities in the context of the tasks in the guideline undertaken at the practice school affect their own anxiety.

*Identifiying the situations that increase one's anxiety, thinking about possible sub-reasons of anxiety?

*Reflecting on how the level of anxiety affects the process.

*Identifying the situations that reduce the level of anxiety

*Giving examples from their own experiences/telling memories, stories while thinking about the above issues

How did the responsibilities/s you took affect your motivation?
To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.
*Reflecting on how responsibilities in the context of the tasks in the guideline undertaken at the practice school affect their own motivation.
*Identifying the situations that decrease motivation, thinking about the sub-reasons that decrease motivation.
*Reflecting on how the level of motivation affects the process.
*Identifying the factors that increase the level of motivation
*Giving examples from their own experiences/telling memories, stories while thinking about the above issues

How will internship experience at the practice school help you?
To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.
*Thinking about the functionality of the internship process within the scope of "Guidance Practices in Schools I" course in terms of professional development
*Thinking about the level of motivation s/he has in maintaining the internship process
* Reflecting on themselves before and during the internship, noticing the changes
* Reflecting on whether the challenges they have overcome in order to be productive and successful help them know themselves better
* Being aware of the changes in themselves in choosing and applying effective ways / strategies etc. to solve the problems they encounter.
*Giving examples from their own experiences/telling memories, stories while thinking about the above issues

How do you think the tasks within the scope of this course and the reports you will prepare will contribute to you?
To facilitate a comprehensive self-evaluation, students were told that they could consider the following ways to answer this question.
*Explaining the role of the reports they wrote on the duties/responsibility within the scope of "Guidance Practices in Schools I" course in terms of self-monitoring and better evaluation.
*Reflecting on the role of report preparation processes (dwelling on practices, writing, explanation) in gaining self-control skills.
*Thinking about the situations in which s/he had difficulties while writing the reports, determining which ways s/he should follow to overcome these difficulties.

In the study, a total of 12 synchronous sessions were conducted, and in each session, the researcher asked questions to encourage students to share their experiences in schools during their internships. The purpose of asking these questions is to facilitate the improvement of students' metacognitive skills during their internship experiences. In this study, synchronous online meetings were structured with the aim of improving students' metacognitive awareness through guided reflection questions. The sessions were not treated as a source of data, but rather as intentional pedagogical contexts designed to trigger reflective and metacognitive thinking. Therefore, the video recordings of these meetings were not subjected to qualitative analysis, to ensure methodological focus and analytic manageability. The goal was for prospective psychological counselors to evaluate their internship experiences in schools more consciously. At the end of this meticulous process, in the interviews conducted with the prospective psychological counselors, the goal was for them to evaluate themselves more effectively and respond more mindfully to the questions. Here, the aim was not to generalize but to identify what aspects were improved in prospective psychological counseling

teachers, who were observed to experience intense anxiety and excitement at the beginning of their internship, by providing support throughout the internship period to foster metacognitive thinking—an essential competency believed to help them during this process.

METHOD

Model of the Research
The research was carried out by qualitative method. Qualitative case study was conducted. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) stated that the most distinctive feature of the qualitative case study is the in-depth investigation of one or several situations, and how the factors related to the situation affect the situation or how they are affected by the situation are investigated with a holistic approach.

Formation of Study Group for Qualitative Data
The participants of the study consisted of two groups of prospective teachers undertaking internships as part of the Guidance Practices I course. One group included six participants interning at a primary school with a low socioeconomic status, while the other group comprised six participants interning at a high school with a middle socioeconomic status. Participation in the study was based on voluntary consent. In qualitative research, the primary aim is not to generalize findings to a broader population, as is often the case in quantitative studies, but rather to explore and understand phenomena in depth by gathering rich and detailed data. In this study, the inclusion of two distinct groups of prospective teachers—one interning at a primary school with a low socioeconomic status and the other at a high school with a middle socioeconomic status—was intentional and grounded in this principle. The rationale for selecting participants from two different socioeconomic and educational contexts was to capture the diverse experiences, challenges, and reflections of prospective teachers working in varied school environments. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how contextual factors, such as the socioeconomic status of the school and the developmental stage of the students (primary vs. high school), influence the teaching practices, professional growth, and perceptions of prospective teachers. By examining these two distinct groups, the study aimed to uncover the nuanced ways in which the school environment and student demographics shape the internship experiences of prospective teachers. Such a design enhances the depth and richness of the data, providing valuable insights into the interplay between context and practice, which might otherwise remain unexplored in a more homogenous sample. This methodological choice aligns with the goals of qualitative research, emphasizing the importance of context-specific, detailed, and multifaceted data to better understand the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Gathering Tool
Interview Form
A semi-structured interview form consisting of 9 open-ended questions, which allows for obtaining detailed responses regarding students' internship practices and experiences, was used.
The questions aimed to get responses regarding the following aspects:
•Prospective teachers' awareness of the concept and significance of metacognition in their practices.
•Their ability to develop and implement effective plans to ensure the efficiency of school-based practices and the quality of the reports they prepare.
•Their self-assessment concerning their proficiency levels, including the identification of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the tasks undertaken during school practices.
•The situations they have observed in the practice school that have influenced them, as well as the alignment between these observations and their initial expectations.
•The extent to which the responsibilities assumed in the practice school influence their levels of anxiety.
•The impact of the responsibilities undertaken in the practice school on their motivation.
•Their perceptions of the contributions of practical training at the practice school to their professional development, and the specific ways in which it facilitates this growth.

•Their views on the contributions of course-related duties and the preparation of reports to their learning and professional competencies, and the specific ways these experiences enhance their development.
•Their self-evaluation regarding how they overcame the challenges they faced in relation to the tasks and responsibilities within the scope of internship practices during this period, as well as the improvements and changes they observed in themselves.

Data Gathering Process
The data were obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted individually with each prospective teacher. For each participant, an interview appointment was scheduled at the researcher's office in the faculty, and face-to-face interviews were carried out. During the interviews, particular attention was paid to avoid any leading or suggestive behavior, and an objective process was followed to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection. The interview data were transcribed and transferred to a digital format without delay.

Analysis of Data
The data in all the reports written by the students, the data of the interviews with the students were analyzed by qualitative inductive content analysis. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) underlined that the principle of induction is dominant in qualitative research and stated that the researcher is in an effort to reveal the themes related to the research problems in question and to form a theory from the detailed data obtained. With inductive content analysis, it is aimed to examine the data in depth and to avoid data loss.

Validity and Reliability Studies
In this study, the identities of the 12 prospective psychological teachers who participated in qualitative semi-structured interviews were kept confidential during the analysis of the data obtained. Accordingly, a unique labeling system was developed for each participant. The labeling system includes the participant's label number based on the order of the interview, as well as information regarding the educational level and socio-economic status of the school where they completed their internship. The labels consist of three main components to identify each participant: (1) a student number indicating the order of the interview (e.g., "S1" represents the first participant), (2) the educational level of the internship school (e.g., "P" represents primary school, while "H" represents high school), and (3) the socio-economic status of the environment where the internship school is located (e.g., "L" indicates a low socio-economic level, while "M" indicates a medium socio-economic level). For instance, the label "S1-P_L" indicates that the first participant completed their internship at a primary school in a low socio-economic environment. Similarly, the label "S2-H_M" indicates that the second participant completed their internship at a high school in a medium socio-economic environment.The primary purpose of using this labeling system was to both protect the participants' identities and present the context of the data in a clear and understandable manner. The labeling system enhances the methodological transparency of the study and allows for systematic analysis of the differences among participants. Furthermore, this system enables the consideration of contextual factors (such as school level and socio-economic status) that may influence the participants' internship experiences.

To increase the reliability of the qualitative coding process, a meticulous analysis procedure was followed in this study. The researcher ensured the reliability of the coding process by re-coding the data at different time intervals and proceeding carefully throughout the process. The codes were reviewed and reassessed at each step to ensure alignment with the research questions and accuracy. An inductive content analysis method was adopted during the coding process. Accordingly, codes were meticulously created based on the data obtained, and these codes were then categorized in alignment with the core questions and purpose of the study. Relationships among the categories were carefully examined, leading to the derivation of higher-level themes that provided greater coherence. Throughout this process, each code was carefully evaluated to ensure that it preserved its meaning

within the dataset. These detailed examinations during the coding process strengthened the reliability of the research and supported the validity of the findings. In conclusion, the coding process was carried out involving a systematic effort to deeply analyze the data and address the research problem.

RESULTS

The findings of this study highlight the diverse perspectives of prospective guidance and psychological counselors on the concept of metacognition, revealing its multidimensional nature and its association with individual experiences. Participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding of metacognition, which was categorized into **nine key themes**:

1.Definition of Metacognition

The participants' responses to the research question *"What do you think metacognition is?"* provide insights into their awareness and understanding of the concept. Metacognition is described through various dimensions, including cognitive awareness, behavioral control, mental process management, synthesis of knowledge, self-awareness, and problem-solving strategies. The findings are summarized in the Table 1, accompanied by direct quotes to illustrate each theme.

Table 1. Definition of Metacognition

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Definition of Metacognition	- Awareness of cognitive processes	25%
	- Thinking about thinking	20%
	- Recognizing thinking styles	15%
2. Awareness and Control of Behaviors	- Conscious time allocation	15%
	- Reflecting on reasons and consequences of actions	10%
	- Conscious procrastination	10%
3. Management of Mental Processes	- Planning mental activities	20%
	- Monitoring and evaluating cognitive processes	15%
4. Synthesis and Application of Knowledge	- Synthesizing knowledge	10%
	- Functional application of theories	10%
5. Self-Awareness	- Recognizing personal strengths and limits	15%
	- Viewing oneself from different perspectives	10%
6. Problem Solving and Strategy Development	- Developing problem-solving strategies	15%
	- Improving weaknesses and enhancing strengths	10%

Most participants defined metacognition as the awareness of one's own thinking processes and the ability to manage these processes.

> **S1-P_L**:
> *"It is the knowledge about cognition. It involves being aware of what we know, how much we know, how we know it, and our learning characteristics while performing certain tasks."*
> **S5-P_L**:
> *"Metacognition is the awareness of one's own thoughts. It can also be described as thinking about thinking."*
> **S10-H_M**:
> *"Metacognition means being aware of our own thinking style. This awareness allows us to develop our own learning strategies."*

This category highlights the importance of cognitive awareness and understanding in metacognition.

Participants linked metacognition to being aware of one's own behaviors and consciously managing them.

S2-H_M:

"Metacognition is being aware of the time one allocates for themselves. It means consciously implementing what they do."

S2-H_M

"For example, if I knowingly complete my assignments at the last minute or study for exams at the last moment, this is metacognition."

S6-H_M:

"Metacognition is being aware of what one can do and acting while thinking about the reasons and consequences of their actions."

This category emphasizes the role of metacognition in managing behaviors and reflecting on actions.

Participants viewed metacognition as the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of one's mental processes.

S3-P_L:

"It is being aware of one's own thinking processes and being able to control them. It involves planning what one will do regarding their mental activities and evaluating themselves."

S11-P_L:

"Thinking about thinking, planning, monitoring, and evaluating. For instance, when I look at my weekly reports, I think about how I did them and whether I could have done them better."

This category highlights the significance of metacognition in organizing and improving mental activities.

Participants associated metacognition with synthesizing information and using it functionally.

S7-H_M:

"Metacognition is synthesizing all our knowledge and using it in a functional way. For example, this semester we are practicing individual psychological counseling, and we synthesize all the knowledge. Depending on the client, we select a specific theory."

S8-P_L:

"Metacognition is thinking about our own thinking, controlling it, and understanding it in a more positive and conceptual way. This helps us direct our thoughts in a more organized manner."

This category demonstrates how metacognition supports the practical application of theoretical knowledge.

Participants linked metacognition to awareness of oneself and one's limits.

S9-P_L:

"Metacognition is being aware of oneself. By thinking about thinking, it allows individuals to view themselves from different perspectives."

S12-H_M:

"For example, realizing that high school-level teaching is more suitable for me, but middle school-level teaching is not, falls under metacognition, in my opinion. High school students are a bit more mature and quiet, which makes me feel that high school teaching suits me better."

This category highlights how metacognition contributes to self-awareness and personal development.

Participants linked metacognition to the ability to develop effective strategies during problem-solving processes.

S10-H_M:

"When we encounter a problem, we can develop effective problem-solving strategies thanks to metacognition."

S7-H_M:
"This time, your awareness increases, and you try to improve your weaknesses while enhancing your strengths."

This category underscores the role of metacognition in improving problem-solving skills and strategies.

The participants' statements demonstrate a multidimensional understanding of the concept of metacognition. Metacognition is associated with various skills, such as being aware of one's own thinking processes, managing these processes, synthesizing information, developing self-awareness, and creating problem-solving strategies. The direct quotes from participants reinforce these findings and highlight the significance of metacognition in individual learning and development.

2. Planning Skills

The participants' responses to the research question *"Did you plan to ensure the efficiency of your practices at the internship school and the quality of the reports in your practice file? What approach did you follow while planning?"* provide insights into their planning skills during the internship process. Participants shared diverse approaches to planning, ranging from systematic preparation to collaboration and communication, which significantly impacted the quality of their reports and the efficiency of their practices. The findings are summarized in the Table 2, accompanied by direct quotes to illustrate each theme.

Table 2. Planning skills.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Approach to the Planning Process	- No detailed planning but focused on research	20%
	- Systematic weekly planning	15%
	- Observing during initial weeks	10%
2. Reporting and Note-Taking Strategies	- Instant note-taking and detailed reporting	20%
	- Draft preparation before finalizing reports	15%
	- Collecting data like photos, notes, and audio recordings	10%
3. Preparation Before and During the Internship	- Using course syllabus for planning	20%
	- Reviewing weekly tasks and brainstorming ideas	15%
4. Collaboration and Communication	- Choosing group partners carefully	10%
	- Exchanging ideas with counselors	10%
5. Impact of Planning on Practices and Reports	- Supporting practices with research, observation, and rehearsal	15%
	- Using reports to identify shortcomings and improve planning	10%

Participants adopted different planning approaches during their internship. While some stated that they did not engage in detailed planning, others demonstrated a systematic approach.

S1-P_L:
"I didn't engage in very detailed planning. I simply conducted various research to increase my knowledge about the practices I was going to perform."

S1-P_L
"Afterward, I researched activities suitable for the audience the practice would address and used the best ones in the implementation."

S3-P_L:
"Every week, I made sure to write down what I did during the internship and the tasks I fulfilled under the task headings in the practice file, usually on weekends, in an organized manner."

S4-H_M:
"Since it was my first time doing an internship and I didn't know what I should or shouldn't do, I spent the first one or two weeks observing."

This category highlights the diversity of planning approaches, ranging from research-focused methods to systematic weekly planning.

Participants developed various methods to write their reports regularly and keep notes.

S2-H_M:
"When we went to the internship school, I took short notes on my phone about what we did there so I wouldn't forget. Later, I tried to transfer them into detailed reports as much as I could."

S6-H_M:
"On the night of the day I worked, I prepared a draft of how I would write my reports and wrote them according to that draft."

S11-P_L:
"At school, I took necessary photos, notes, and sometimes audio recordings with the counselor's permission. I reported them regularly and created a dedicated folder for them on my computer."

This category emphasizes the importance of regular note-taking and reporting for memory support and improved report quality.

Participants supported the planning process by preparing both before and during the internship.

S7-H_M:
"The course syllabus was very helpful in my planning. Without it, planning on my own might have been difficult."

S7-H_M (on brainstorming):
"Before the internship, I started looking at what I needed to do that week a day or two earlier. I tried to come up with ideas about what I could do."

S8-P_L:
"We were already doing extra preparation with our friends, but apart from that, I researched classroom activities. I thought about how I could do better."

This category demonstrates how preparation before and during the internship positively impacted participants' practices.

Participants expressed that collaboration and communication during the internship positively affected their planning and implementation processes.

S12-H_M:
"Here, I chose my group partner more carefully. I selected a friend I could work well and comfortably with. We were constantly in communication with the psychological counselor and guidance teacher at the internship school."

S11-P_L:
"We preferred to talk to the counselor about the problems we observed at school, discussing what we could do and exchanging ideas."

This category highlights the role of collaboration and communication in enhancing planning and implementation processes.

Participants emphasized the effects of planning processes on the efficiency of internship practices and the quality of reports.

S10-H_M:
"For my practices at the internship school, I first went through a detailed research process, followed by observation and rehearsal."
S8-P_L:
"While writing the reports, I realized my shortcomings at some points. I thought I could have done this differently or added that. So, the report for that week was very helpful for planning the next week."

This category underscores how planning processes contributed to the efficiency of practices and the improvement of report quality.

The findings of the study reveal the diversity of planning approaches adopted by prospective teachers during their internship process and the impact of these processes on the efficiency of practices and the quality of reports. Participants used various methods such as observation, note-taking, reporting, collaboration, and preparation, which significantly contributed to their internship process and individual development. Their statements demonstrate that planning is critically important for both individual growth and professional experience.

3. Perception of Self-Competence Levels
The self-evaluations of participants as prospective psychological counselors and guidance teachers provide various insights into their perceptions of professional competence, strengths, and areas for improvement. Participants shared diverse perspectives on their competence levels, identifying both strengths and developmental areas. These findings are supported by direct quotes from participants' statements and summarized in the Table 3.

Table 3. Perception of self-competence levels.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Perception of Professional Competence	- Confidence in competence during practice	20%
	- Competence in specific tasks but lack of experience	15%
	- Recognition that competence develops post-graduation	10%
2. Strengths	- Communication skills	20%
	- Empathy and patience	15%
	- Quick adaptability	10%
3. Weaknesses and Areas for Improvement	- Preference for improvisation over systematic work	20%
	- Introversion and emotional sensitivity	15%
	- Forgetfulness and difficulty with catharsis	10%
4. Professional Development and Goals	- Pursuing further education	10%
	- Improving communication with introverted students	10%
	- Enhancing creativity in tasks	15%
5. Impact of Supportive Environment	- Positive influence of guidance counselors and peers	15%
	- Reduced anxiety through interaction with students	10%

Participants generally perceived themselves as competent in school counseling practices while recognizing challenges stemming from lack of experience and initial difficulties.

S1-P_L:
"I think I was more than sufficient in the practice we carried out at our school."
S2-H_M:
"I don't think I was very unsuccessful at school because we conducted individual tests and presentations. In these situations, I felt competent and thought I communicated well with students. But I'm not as experienced as a seasoned counselor."

S4-H_M:
"Graduating from the counseling and guidance department doesn't mean you've become a fully competent counselor."

This category highlights participants' confidence in their competence, while acknowledging the importance of experience for professional growth.

Participants identified their strengths in professional practices, such as communication skills, empathy, patience, and quick adaptability.

S3-P_L:
"We had a great and beneficial activity and seminar process with the students. I established good communication and, despite being a new teacher in their class, I adapted to them and made them like me."

S6-H_M:
"I think my strength is that I didn't have much difficulty establishing relationships with students."

S7-H_M:
"I think perseverance is my strength. When you want something and do it with love, success always follows."

S12-H_M:
"I can adapt quickly; for example, I resolved my shyness problem by adapting quickly."

This category highlights the diverse strengths participants bring to their professional roles.

Participants identified areas for improvement in their professional practices and emphasized their efforts to address these weaknesses.

S1-P_L:
"My weakness is that I prefer improvisation over planned and systematic work. However, I can say that I've started to improve this trait."

S4-H_M:
"If I were to give an example of my weaknesses, I'd say being a bit introverted. I'm confident that I'll overcome this by seeking counseling soon and, after graduating, I'll reach a level where I can best support people with the education I've received."

S6-H_M:
"The most challenging part of the interview was being overly emotional. Although I didn't experience catharsis with the student, I think this trait might make professional life difficult for me."

S8-P_L:
"I'm a bit forgetful. I can't say I'm very familiar with every detail of students' situations or family circumstances. Also, I'm very emotional; there were students with very low socioeconomic status, and every time I saw them, I felt very upset and internalized it."

This category highlights participants' awareness of their developmental areas and their determination to address them.

Participants recognized their professional shortcomings and set goals to improve these areas.

S4-H_M:
"I realized my shortcomings in theories, techniques, and practices, and I'm eager to take training in these areas. After graduation, I'll do my best to pursue these trainings."

S10-H_M:
"My weakness was my inadequacy in reaching introverted and shy students. I think I need to improve myself in this area."

S12-H_M:

"For example, I could be more creative in designing bulletin boards. My creativity was lacking there; I just printed materials, and my group partner helped more."

This category demonstrates participants' motivation to develop their professional skills and set actionable goals.

Participants expressed that a supportive environment during the internship (including guidance counselors, peers, and students) positively contributed to their professional development.

S12-H_M:

"The school's psychological counselor and guidance teacher were very friendly, and I also had a good relationship with my friends, which helped me overcome this easily. If it had been a more gloomy environment, I probably wouldn't have been able to overcome it."

S9-P_L:

"After interacting with the students and meeting with the school counselor and guidance teacher, I started managing these situations better."

This category highlights the importance of a supportive environment in fostering professional growth.

The findings reveal that prospective psychological counselors and guidance teachers are aware of their professional competence, strengths, and areas for improvement. Participants emphasized their efforts to develop themselves, supported by the positive impact of a supportive environment. These findings demonstrate high levels of professional awareness and motivation for growth among prospective psychological counselors and guidance teachers.

4. Observed Situations in the Internship School and Alignment with Expectations

Participants' observations in internship schools revealed various experiences that shaped their professional perspectives. These observations and their alignment with participants' expectations provide valuable insights into their professional development. The findings are summarized in the Table 4, accompanied by direct quotes to illustrate each theme.

Table 4. Observed situations in the internship school and alignment with expectations.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Motivating Effect of Challenging Conditions	- Challenging conditions increased professional motivation	25%
	- Satisfaction from connecting with students	20%
2. Socioeconomic Level of School and Educational Conditions	- Disappointment due to low socioeconomic levels	20%
	- Poor physical conditions of the school	15%
	- Socioeconomic challenges observed through students' habits	15%
3. Alignment Between Expectations and Reality	- Keeping expectations low to avoid negative effects	15%
	- Conditions fell below expectations	20%
	- Internship school exceeded expectations	10%
4. Role of Psychological Counselors and Supportive Approaches	- Supportive role of school counselors	20%
	- Collaborative response to crisis situations	15%
5. Communication with Students and Observed Differences	- Variety of issues students brought to counseling exceeded expectations	15%
	- High awareness among students with mixed effects	15%
6. Behavior of Parents and School Culture	- Parents treating the school environment as a social space	10%
	- Parents interfering in education and lack of communication with teachers	15%

Some participants expressed that challenging conditions in internship schools increased their professional motivation.

S1-P_L described the challenging school environment as motivational: *"The school where I conducted the practice was entirely encouraging in terms of struggles. Despite many negative situations at the school, their existence increased my internal motivation."*

They also noted that these conditions enhanced their effectiveness and ambition in practices: *"And it made me more effective and ambitious in the practices conducted for the students."*

S7-H_M highlighted the lack of psychological counselors and heavy workload as obstacles but found satisfaction in connecting with students: *"But the positive aspects, such as bonding with students, their sincerity, and their approach to you, are very fulfilling. Seeing that you can truly touch someone's life is the most fulfilling thing."*

Participants observed the impact of socioeconomic levels on students and evaluated how these observations aligned with their expectations.

S8-P_L expressed disappointment in working at a school with low socioeconomic levels: *"From what I heard from my friends, I was a bit disappointed because we went to a school with very low socioeconomic levels. Before adding anything to the students, they had such serious issues that they needed to overcome them first."*

S9-P_L noticed the socioeconomic challenges through students' clothing and habits: *"At the beginning of the internship, I realized that the students' socioeconomic level was very low. Their clothing—most didn't have proper attire, and some had torn ones—and their inability to buy much from the canteen indicated this."*

S11-P_L highlighted the poor physical conditions of the school and socioeconomic struggles: *"There wasn't sufficient space around the school for students, or there were structures that could pose risks. The building was in poor condition, and there were heating problems during the winter."*

Participants evaluated the alignment between their expectations and the realities they experienced in internship schools.

S1-P_L noted that keeping expectations low helped avoid negative effects during challenging times: *"I didn't have high expectations from our school. Having expectations would have negatively affected me during this challenging process."*

S5-P_L shared that the conditions fell below their expectations: *"I was very surprised to see such a school in Aydın province. If this is the situation in a developed city, I can't even imagine rural or eastern schools. In this regard, it was below my expectations."*

S12-H_M stated that the internship school exceeded their expectations: *"The internship school was above my expectations. I expected a much lower level."*

Participants observed the roles of psychological counselors in internship schools and emphasized their supportive and collaborative approaches.

S1-P_L expressed satisfaction with the supportive role of the school counselor: *"My most important expectation was for the school counselor to be supportive and encouraging in practices with us. This expectation was more than fulfilled."*

S4-H_M found the counselors' quick and collaborative response to crisis situations impressive:

"I was very happy to see three school counselors who happened to be there immediately trying to come up with solutions and planning what to do."

Participants observed students' awareness, behaviors, and diversity of issues, which impacted their professional perceptions.

S2-H_M noted that the variety of issues students brought to the counseling service exceeded their expectations:
"Actually, my expectation was that students would come to the counseling service for simple reasons like exam anxiety. But the variety of issues caught my attention. For example, a problem related to boy-girl relationships was brought up, and that caught my interest."
S6-H_M observed students' high level of awareness and its mixed effects:
"I was surprised by how aware the students were. While this has positive aspects, I think it also has negative aspects. They have a lot of anxiety, which negatively affects their experiences."

Some participants observed the attitudes of parents within the school environment and their impact on students.

S3-P_L was surprised by parents treating the school environment as a social space:
"I was very surprised by the parents' disregard for rules and spending the entire day in the schoolyard. Also, during lunch breaks, parents fed their children as if they were having a picnic in the schoolyard, and they did this constantly."
S11-P_L noted parents' interference in education and lack of communication with teachers:
"Parents are normally not allowed to enter the school, but they interfere a lot. I observed a lack of communication between parents and teachers."

The findings of this study highlight the diverse observations of prospective guidance and psychological counselors during their internship experiences. Key themes included the motivating effect of challenging conditions, the impact of socioeconomic levels on education, alignment between expectations and reality, the supportive roles of psychological counselors, communication with students, and the influence of parents on the school environment. These observations significantly contributed to participants' professional awareness and provided valuable insights for their future practices.

5. The Impact of Responsibilities on Anxiety
Participants' anxiety levels during the internship period were analyzed based on the responsibilities they undertook and the experiences they gained throughout this process. The findings are summarized in the Table 5, accompanied by direct quotes to illustrate each theme.

Table 5. The impact of responsibilities on anxiety.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Initial Anxiety and Uncertainty	- Feeling overwhelmed by the volume of tasks	25%
	- Anxiety due to unfamiliarity with the institution	20%
2. The Impact of Responsibilities on Anxiety	- Responsibilities reduced anxiety	20%
	- Responsibilities brought mental alertness without causing negative anxiety	15%
	- Initial overwhelm transformed into manageability	15%
3. Planning and Mentor Support	- Planned work reduced anxiety	20%
	- Mentor support alleviated anxiety	15%
	- Two-way communication with mentors reduced stress	15%
4. Task Difficulty and Physical/Mental Fatigue	- Exhaustion due to task intensity	15%
	- Overlap of internship tasks with coursework increased anxiety	20%

Table 5 (Continued). The impact of responsibilities on anxiety.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
5. Decrease of Anxiety and Adaptation Process	- Successful task completion reduced anxiety	20%
	- Initial anxiety transformed into satisfaction	15%
	- Enjoyment of tasks after adaptation	10%
6. Exam Periods and Intensity	- Increased anxiety during exam periods	15%
	- Stress due to overlapping tasks and exams	10%
7. Contribution of Tasks to Personal Development	- Tasks contributed to professional growth	20%
	- Individual counseling sessions enhanced development	15%

During the first weeks of the internship, many participants experienced high levels of anxiety due to the intensity of the tasks and the uncertainty involved.

S3-P_L expressed feelings of inadequacy upon seeing the internship tasks for the first time: *"At first, when I saw the tasks we had to complete for our internship file and when our instructor explained them, I thought there were too many tasks, and I felt I lacked the necessary skills to accomplish them."*

S8-P_L mentioned feeling anxious due to the sheer volume of tasks in the guide: *"When we first started, reading through that guide made me very nervous because there was so much to do, and I didn't know anything. It was my first time doing this, and I was very anxious about how I would manage."*

S5-P_L shared that the idea of interning at an unfamiliar institution caused initial anxiety: *"At first, I was very anxious because it was my first time going to a foreign institution outside of the university."*

Responsibilities had varying effects on participants' anxiety levels, sometimes increasing anxiety and sometimes alleviating it.

S1-P_L noted that taking on responsibilities reduced their anxiety: *"I admit I was anxious at first. However, once I started taking on responsibilities, I realized that my tasks were not as anxiety-inducing as I initially thought."*

S9-P_L stated that responsibilities brought mental alertness without causing negative anxiety: *"Later on, I realized that these responsibilities actually kept me more mentally alert. They didn't increase my anxiety level that much, to be honest."*

S12-H_M explained that tasks initially seemed overwhelming but became manageable as they were completed: *"At first, I was a bit anxious, honestly. It felt like there were too many responsibilities. But later, I realized the tasks were just intimidating on paper, and they were actually perfectly suited to me."*

Planned work and mentor support played a significant role in reducing participants' anxiety levels.

S3-P_L emphasized the anxiety-reducing effect of working systematically: *"Because I prepared my reports with a planned system, my anxiety levels significantly dropped in the following days."*

S8-P_L highlighted the positive influence of mentor support: *"You had a big impact because you were very aware of our anxiety and worked with us effectively to reduce it."*

S11-P_L noted that two-way communication with the mentor helped alleviate anxiety: *"Being able to contact you easily about the process and your accessibility to us made me feel more at ease."*

Some participants reported experiencing physical and mental fatigue due to the intensity of internship tasks.

> **S4-H_M** described the difficulty of tasks and the exhausting nature of reporting:
> *"Completing the tasks and reports in the application file, to be honest, wore me out a bit. The sheer amount of work and uncertainty about whether I could manage it caused me a lot of stress."*
> **S2-H_M** mentioned that combining internship tasks with regular coursework increased anxiety:
> *"When we came home from the internship and worked on assignments and reports, it was hard because it overlapped with schoolwork, making it quite intense."*

As the internship progressed, participants' anxiety levels decreased, and they became more comfortable with their tasks.

> **S6-H_M** shared that successfully completing tasks reduced their anxiety:
> *"However, as I continued the internship, saw the environment, and successfully completed the tasks, my anxiety diminished."*
> **S7-H_M** stated that initial anxiety transformed into satisfaction over time:
> *"I was more anxious at first, of course, because it was my first time doing something like this. But as I saw that I could manage it, my anxiety turned into a sense of fulfillment."*
> **S8-P_L** mentioned enjoying the tasks after adapting to them:
> *"Later, the lessons we had with you and the adaptation I achieved at the school gradually reduced my anxiety. In fact, by the end, I started enjoying the tasks a lot."*

The intensity of internship tasks during exam periods increased anxiety for some participants.

> **S2-H_M** explained that exam periods made internship tasks more stressful:
> *"When it coincided with exam periods, the assignments we had to complete increased our anxiety a bit."*
> **S9-P_L** mentioned experiencing anxiety during midterm and final exams:
> *"Only during midterm and final exam periods, when there was too much to do, did I experience anxiety."*

Despite their difficulty, many participants viewed the internship tasks as valuable for their personal development.

> **S4-H_M** emphasized the contribution of challenging tasks to personal growth:
> *"But I knew they contributed to me, so I managed to overcome them in some way."*
> **S10-H_M** highlighted the benefits of individual counseling sessions for psychological and career development:
> *"The individual counseling sessions we had with students were very beneficial. They greatly contributed to my development in both psychological counseling and career guidance."*

Throughout the internship period, participants' anxiety levels were initially high due to the intensity and uncertainty of the tasks. However, factors such as adaptation, mentor support, and successful task completion helped reduce anxiety over time. While the difficulty of tasks caused physical and mental fatigue for some, the overall experience was seen as beneficial for personal and professional development. Additionally, exam periods posed challenges by increasing anxiety levels. These findings demonstrate that the internship process is a significant experience for anxiety management and professional growth.

6. The Impact of Responsibilities on Motivation

The effects of the responsibilities taken during the internship period on participants' motivation were analyzed based on their individual experiences and observations. The findings are summarized in the Table 6, accompanied by direct quotes to illustrate each theme.

Table 6. The impact of responsibilities on motivation.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Initial Motivation and Challenges	- Lack of motivation at the beginning	20%
	- Excitement due to reopening of schools	15%
2. The Impact of Tasks on Motivation	- Positive outcomes increased intrinsic motivation	20%
	- Application tasks increased eagerness	15%
	- Repetitive tasks reduced motivation	15%
3. Interaction with Students and Professional Motivation	- Connecting with students increased dedication for the profession	20%
	- One-on-one communication motivated participants	15%
	- Positive feedback from students boosted motivation	15%
4. Supportive Factors and Motivation	- Support from mentors increased motivation	20%
	- Peer support contributed to progress	15%
	- Encouragement from guiding teachers boosted motivation	15%
5. Challenges and Personal Development	- Awareness of personal growth increased motivation	20%
	- Heavy workload negatively affected motivation	15%
	- Challenges brought knowledge and experience	15%
6. Contribution of Responsibilities to Motivation	- Responsibilities were strong motivators	20%
	- Tasks and responsibilities positively influenced motivation	15%
7. Feedback from Students	- Students' feedback increased motivation	20%
	- Understanding students' lives boosted motivation	15%

At the beginning of the internship, participants who experienced a lack of motivation noted that their motivation increased as the process progressed, influenced by tasks and responsibilities.

> **S6-H_M** shared experiencing a lack of motivation initially: *"At first, I didn't have much motivation because we were only given a theoretical explanation of the school's working system."*
> **S3-P_L** explained that the uncertainty surrounding internships during the pandemic negatively affected their motivation but felt excited when schools reopened: *"Having studied at home for two years due to the pandemic, the uncertainty about whether I would be able to intern made me quite anxious. Later, the reopening of schools and the opportunity to intern made me very happy and excited."*

Tasks had both positive and negative effects on participants' motivation.

> **S1-P_L** stated that observing the positive outcomes of tasks increased their intrinsic motivation: *"Seeing the reflections of my work at school also increased my intrinsic motivation."*
> **S10-H_M** noted that application tasks made them more eager to attend the internship school: *"On the days when we had application tasks, I realized I went to the internship school more willingly. These applications increased my excitement for the internship process."*
> **S8-P_L** mentioned that repetitive tasks reduced their motivation: *"Sometimes it felt like there were very similar tasks, which slightly lowered my motivation. At some point, it felt like I was just repeating myself."*

Direct communication and interaction with students were significant sources of motivation for participants.

S2-H_M expressed that connecting with students increased their dedication for the profession and   motivation:
"When I saw that I could connect with students and do the job well, I regained my sense of self-awareness. It made me want to work better and desire this job even more."
S7-H_M highlighted the motivational impact of one-on-one communication with students:
"Because engaging directly with students and feeling that you're helping them motivated me a lot."
S11-P_L emphasized the motivational effect of positive feedback from students:
"When they said things like 'Come back to us, we want to see you again,' it made me feel like I should pursue this profession. That was very motivating for me."

Support from mentors, guiding teachers, and peers had a positive impact on participants' motivation.

S4-H_M noted that the support of the school's psychological counselor increased their motivation:
"The support provided by the school's psychological counselor regarding the application motivated me to do this job and reassured me that I could succeed."
S12-H_M explained how their peer's support contributed to individual progress:
"My groupmate was very helpful in this regard. If I were alone, I wouldn't have been able to progress this much. They helped me a lot in areas I didn't understand."
S8-P_L highlighted the motivational impact of supportive approaches from mentors and guidingteachers:
"Your feedback, the plans we made, and the encouragement from the school's psychological counselor and guiding teacher motivated me. They didn't make us feel inadequate. This increased my motivation both because of you and the guiding teacher."

While the difficulty of tasks sometimes led to a loss of motivation, it also contributed to participants' personal development.

S5-P_L noted the awareness of personal growth gained through tasks:
"Thanks to the tasks, I can see my own development week by week."
S11-P_L explained that the intensity of tasks sometimes negatively affected their motivation:
"To be honest, my motivation wasn't greatly increased because the workload was so heavy that it sometimes overwhelmed me."
S4-H_M shared that the challenges brought knowledge and experience, ultimately increasing their   motivation:
"Both at the internship school and in the application file, I faced challenges. But when I thought about the knowledge and experience I would gain from them, I realized they motivated me."

Responsibilities generally had a positive impact on participants' motivation.

S9-P_L   described   the   motivational   effect   of   responsibilities:
"I can say that the responsibilities I took on during the internship were the best motivators for me. As I fulfilled these responsibilities, I noticed that my motivation increased significantly."
S10-H_M expressed that tasks and responsibilities positively influenced their motivation throughout   the   process:
"The tasks and responsibilities I took on during the internship increased my motivation for the process."

Feedback from students had a motivational effect on participants.

- **S12-H_M**   shared   that   students'   feedback   increased   their   motivation:
"For example, when we prepared the bulletin board, seeing students stop to look at it

increased our motivation. Later, when we gave presentations, the students' feedback also motivated us."

- **S8-P_L** emphasized the motivational impact of student feedback: *"The feedback I received from them made me very happy. Since there were different students and situations, we had the chance to understand their lives better, which increased my motivation."*

The tasks and responsibilities undertaken during the internship significantly influenced participants' motivation levels. While the difficulty of tasks initially led to a loss of motivation, supportive factors, interaction with students, and the completion of tasks contributed to an increase in motivation as the process progressed. Feedback from students and mentor support emerged as key elements that boosted motivation. Additionally, the tasks' contribution to personal development and professional awareness led to the internship being regarded as a generally positive experience.

7. Contributions of Guidance Practice Training

This study analyzed the gains participants achieved during their 12-week internship period based on their individual experiences and observations. The findings are categorized into seven key themes, supported by direct participant statements.

Table 7. Contributions of guidance practice training.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Importance of Psychological Counseling Profession and Identity Development	- Understanding the societal significance of the profession	20%
	- Strengthening professional identity	15%
2. Contributions to Professional Development	- Gaining lasting professional skills	20%
	- Preparing for future career	15%
3. Interaction with Students and Development of Communication Skills	- Increased professional awareness through student interaction	20%
	- Improving communication skills	15%
4. Reinforcement of Theoretical Knowledge Through Practice	- Applying theoretical knowledge in practice	20%
	- Preventing theoretical knowledge from fading without practice	15%
5. Support from Guiding Teachers and Mentors	- Motivational impact of guidance and support	20%
	- Building positive relationships with mentors	15%
6. Insufficiency of Internship Duration and Importance of Diversity	- Criticism of short internship duration	20%
	- Suggestions for diversifying internship applications	15%
7. Challenges and Personal Development	- Overcoming feelings of inadequacy	20%
	- Awareness of personal growth through tasks	15%

Participants gained a better understanding of the societal importance of their profession and strengthened their professional identity during the internship.

> **S1-P_L** emphasized the societal significance of the profession: *"We hold the qualification of being professionals who directly impact people's lives and can provide help in almost any problem they might encounter in life."*
> **S5-P_L** expressed feeling integrated into the profession: *"For 12 weeks, I truly felt like I was part of this profession."*

Participants developed professional skills and stated that the experiences gained during the internship were lasting.

S1-P_L described the internship as a valuable series of professional gains: *"Thanks to our internship activities, I entered a very important series of gains during these 12 weeks."*

S3-P_L highlighted the internship's role in preparing them for their future profession: *"I think it prepared me very well for the profession I will pursue in the future."*

Direct communication with students increased participants' professional awareness and allowed them to improve their communication skills.

S2-H_M shared that interacting with students heightened their professional awareness: *"When I realized I could connect with students and do the job well, I regained my sense of self-awareness."*

S10-H_M explained how their communication skills improved: *"I had the chance to observe students and learned how to establish healthier communication with them."*

Participants had the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they learned at university during the internship, contributing to their professional skills.

S6-H_M emphasized the importance of seeing theoretical knowledge in practice: *"The biggest contribution to me was seeing the implementation of the lessons I learned theoretically at university."*

S7-H_M noted that theoretical knowledge could be forgotten if not supported by practice: *"We learn things in theoretical lessons, yes, but if we don't apply them in practice, that knowledge fades away."*

The support provided by guiding teachers and mentors positively influenced participants' professional development.

S4-H_M highlighted the motivational impact of the guiding teacher's support: *"The support provided by the school's psychological counselor regarding the application motivated me to do this job and reassured me that I could succeed."*

S12-H_M described the positive relationship they built with the guiding teacher: *"We had a very good relationship with the school's psychological counselor and guiding teacher. When it ended, we even bought a cake to celebrate."*

Participants stated that the internship duration should be extended and the applications diversified.

S3-P_L suggested increasing the duration of the internship: *"I think attending the internship for only one term is very insufficient for students studying in education faculties."*

S8-P_L recommended conducting internships at various institutions: *"We definitely need the opportunity to work at different places, such as rehabilitation centers and special education schools."*

Participants expressed that the challenges they faced during the internship contributed to their personal and professional development.

S9-P_L shared overcoming initial feelings of inadequacy: *"At the beginning of the process, I honestly didn't know how to approach certain students because I hadn't had such an experience before. I felt quite inadequate at first, but I think I managed to overcome this over time."*

S5-P_L noted the awareness of personal growth gained through tasks: *"Thanks to the tasks, I can see my own development week by week."*

The 12-week internship period helped participants develop their professional identity, reinforce their theoretical knowledge through practice, and improve their communication skills with students. The support provided by guiding teachers and mentors allowed participants to benefit more from the process. However, the short duration and limited scope of the internship were criticized, with suggestions for extending the internship and diversifying its applications across different institutions. The challenges faced during the internship contributed positively to participants' personal and professional growth.

8. Contributions of Tasks and Reports Within the Scope of the Course

The gains participants achieved through the tasks and report preparation processes within the scope of the course were analyzed based on their individual experiences and observations. The findings are summarized in the Table 8, accompanied by direct quotes to illustrate each theme.

Table 8. Contributions of tasks and reports within the scope of the course.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Professional Development and Contributions of Reports	- Reports contributed to professional development	20%
	- Reports helped retain learned information	15%
2. Contributions of Tasks to Professional and Personal Experience	- Tasks enhanced professional experience	20%
	- Tasks contributed to personal confidence	15%
3. Self-Assessment and Awareness	- Reports enabled self-assessment	20%
	- Reports helped identify weaknesses	15%
4. Contributions of Reports to Learning and Knowledge Reinforcement Process	- Reports reinforced learned information	20%
	- Writing clarified knowledge	15%
5. Importance of Planned and Disciplined Work	- Instilled habit of planned and disciplined work	20%
	- Highlighted benefits of weekly report writing	15%
6. Future Utility of Tasks and Reports	- Reports as future reference materials	20%
	- Reports useful for cross-term comparisons	15%
7. Challenges and Shortcomings of Reports	- Delays in report writing led to knowledge loss	20%
	- Regular writing prevents information loss	15%

Participants stated that the report preparation process contributed to their professional development and that the knowledge and experiences gained through this process were lasting.

S1-P_L highlighted the role of reports in professional development:
"I think the reports we prepared helped us build the steps that will serve as a foundation for our professional development."

S10-H_M emphasized the impact of reports on learning retention:
"The reports we prepared within the scope of this course contributed to making what I learned more permanent."

Tasks increased participants' professional experience, instilled a sense of responsibility, and contributed to their personal development.

S2-H_M stated that tasks enhanced their professional experience:
"I can say that the tasks I performed increased my experience."

S4-H_M noted the impact of tasks on personal confidence:
"I think the tasks helped me come out of my shell and be more relaxed."

The report-writing process enabled participants to evaluate themselves and recognize their shortcomings.

S7-H_M described the impact of reports on self-assessment:
"At first, I think the weekly reports contributed the most to me by allowing me to look at myself as if from the outside."
S8-P_L explained how reports helped them identify weaknesses:
"Normally, I'm not someone who likes to criticize myself, but while writing the reports, I always saw a deficiency in myself. I also saw positive aspects, but I started noticing my shortcomings more."

Report preparation reinforced learned information and provided a concrete evaluation of the activities performed during the process.

S6-H_M highlighted the role of reports in knowledge reinforcement:
"I gained preliminary knowledge about how to document the activities we will implement in schools."
S12-H_M emphasized the role of writing in reinforcing learned information:
"When you write it down, it actually becomes clearer."

Regular report writing instilled participants with the habit of planned and disciplined work.

S11-P_L explained the importance of regular report writing:
"Writing reports every week showed me the importance of being organized, planned, and disciplined."
S7-H_M compared weekly report writing to writing all reports at once:
"There's a big difference between writing reports weekly and writing them all at once at the end of the term. Of course, writing them weekly is better."

Participants stated that the reports they prepared could be used as reference materials in the future.

S4-H_M emphasized the future utility of reports:
"Having a source to look back on when I encounter similar situations in the future, like what the psychological counselor at the internship school did, is a significant advantage for me."
S12-H_M suggested using reports for cross-term comparisons:
"I can compare the reports I wrote in the first term with the ones I will write in the next internship term."

Participants expressed the difficulties they faced during the report-writing process due to workload and the resulting loss of information.

S7-H_M described the impact of delays in report writing:
"In my current (second term) internship, I'm two or three weeks behind in writing reports. Of course, some things are forgotten during that time."
S8-P_L emphasized the importance of regular report writing in preventing information loss:
"Writing weekly reports has a huge benefit because some of my friends wrote all 12 weeks' reports in one week and submitted them directly. But nothing stays sufficiently in one's mind."

The tasks and report preparation processes within the scope of the course remarkably contributed to participants' professional and personal development. Tasks increased professional experience, while reports reinforced learned information and provided opportunities for self-assessment. Regular report writing instilled participants with the habit of planned and disciplined work, and the reports prepared became valuable documents that could serve as reference materials in the future. However, delays in report writing due to workload were noted as a challenge, leading to knowledge loss.

9. Overcoming Challenges and Perceptions of Development
Participants' responses to this theme focused on the strategies they used to overcome challenges, their personal and professional development, and the changes they experienced throughout the internship

process. The findings are summarized in the Table 9, accompanied by direct quotes to illustrate each theme.

Table 9. Overcoming challenges and perceptions of development.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Strategies for Coping with Challenges	- Self-motivation in overcoming challenges	20%
	- Collaboration and consulting others	15%
2. Personal Growth and Behavioral Changes	- Positive personal transformation	20%
	- Improvements in behavioral control and calmness	15%
3. Professional Development and Preparation	- Development of professional skills	20%
	- Preparation for future career	15%
4. Anxiety and Stress Management	- Decreased anxiety about tasks	20%
	- Overcoming anxiety through courage	15%
5. Communication and Collaboration	- Improved communication with students	20%
	- Enhanced collaboration with peers	15%
6. Classroom Management and Activity Planning	- Progress in classroom management	20%
	- Overcoming challenges in activity planning	15%

Participants developed various strategies to cope with the challenges they faced during the internship. These strategies included self-motivation, seeking support, problem-solving skills, and collaboration.

> **S4-H_M** emphasized the importance of self-motivation:
> *"I tried to motivate myself when facing challenges."*
> **S2-H_M** highlighted the role of collaboration and consulting others:
> *"In situations I couldn't resolve by talking or where my experience wasn't sufficient, I would consult other friends."*
> **S5-P_L** reflected on ignoring challenges and learning from them:
> *"Sometimes I ignored the challenges I faced... But when I'm assigned to a position, the first things I'll pay attention to will be those I ignored."*

Participants observed personal growth and positive changes in their behavior during the internship process.

> **S1-P_L** described their personal transformation:
> *"I think I've undergone very positive changes from my state during the first week of the internship to now."*
> **S11-P_L** noted improvements in behavioral control and calmness:
> *"I used to be more anxious and wasn't very calm... I've seen that I can restrain myself better now."*
> **S7-H_M** emphasized gaining confidence:
> *"Of course, I gained confidence in terms of tasks and responsibilities."*

The internship process contributed to participants' development of professional skills and preparation for their future careers.

> **S3-P_L** shared how the internship prepared them professionally:
> *"I didn't feel ready to graduate or start working, but through the tasks I took on during the internship, I learned what I would do in my professional life."*
> **S6-H_M** emphasized the future benefits of professional development:
> *"I think the other activities will be very beneficial for me in my future professional life."*
> **S9-P_L** expressed how the process enhanced their competence:
> *"The process added a lot to me in terms of competence."*

Participants stated that they learned to manage anxiety and stress during the internship and made significant progress in this area.

> **S3-P_L** described how their initial anxiety about classroom management decreased over time: *"I was a bit anxious about not being able to maintain control when conducting activities in classrooms. But as I entered classrooms each day, I think I got better at maintaining control."*
> **S12-H_M** emphasized overcoming anxiety through courage: *"Challenges always start with anxiety, like 'I won't be able to do it,' etc. Later, taking a step or finding courage actually helps."*
> **S11-P_L** noted how reduced anxiety improved their performance: *"If it were the old me, I'd be more stressed... but I saw that I could accomplish things better when I was more relaxed."*

The internship process allowed participants to develop their communication and collaboration skills. Relationships established with students and colleagues enhanced their professional awareness.

> **S3-P_L** observed improvements in communication with younger students: *"I was someone who could establish good communication, but I observed that I could also communicate well with students younger than me and make them like me."*
> **S12-H_M** highlighted the importance of collaboration with group members: *"My group friend helped me a lot in overcoming this... we have a very good friendship now."*

Participants expressed initial difficulties in classroom management and activity planning but noted improvements in these skills over time.

> **S8-P_L** described their progress in classroom management: *"I struggled with classroom practices and had difficulties in classroom management, but as the number of practices increased, it became easier and more enjoyable for me."*
> **S6-H_M** explained the challenges of planning activities: *"Choosing information suitable for the target audience of the activity and capturing their attention was challenging."*

The internship process enhanced participants' ability to cope with challenges, contributed to their personal and professional development, and boosted their confidence. Participants made progress in managing anxiety and stress, improved their communication and collaboration skills, and overcame initial difficulties in classroom management and activity planning. These experiences significantly contributed to their preparation for professional life and their overall growth.

Metacognitive Thinking Strategies Used by Prospective Psychological Counselors
This study analyzed the multidimensional skills of prospective counselors, including metacognitive awareness, managing thought processes, planning, evaluation, and problem-solving during their 12-week internship. Metacognitive strategies such as self-awareness, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving were explored in six key themes, supported by direct participant statements.

Table 10. Metacognitive thinking strategies used by prospective psychological counselors.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
1. Awareness of Cognitive Processes	- Understanding one's learning strategies	20%
	- Reflecting on thoughts and identifying strengths and weaknesses	15%
2. Regulation of Behavior and Emotional Control	- Awareness of time and behavior regulation	20%
	- Managing emotional responses in professional settings	15%

Table 10 (Continued).   Metacognitive thinking strategies used by prospective psychological counselors.

Category	Codes	Percentage (%)
3. Planning and Monitoring Cognitive Processes	- Setting goals and tracking progress	20%
	- Evaluating practices systematically	15%
4. Synthesis and Application of Knowledge	- Integrating theoretical knowledge into practice	20%
	- Organizing thoughts conceptually and applying them effectively	15%
5. Self-Awareness and Reflection	- Reflecting on capabilities and limitations	20%
	- Adjusting professional choices based on self-awareness	15%
6. Problem-Solving and Strategy Development	- Developing effective strategies to address challenges	20%
	- Enhancing strengths and addressing weaknesses systematically	15%

Participants demonstrated awareness of their cognitive processes, emphasizing "thinking about thinking" and understanding their learning strategies.

S1-P_L described metacognition as:
"The knowledge about one's cognition. It is being aware of what we know, how much we know, and how we learn while performing specific tasks."
S5-P_L highlighted the reflective nature of metacognition:
"Metacognition is the ability to think about one's own thoughts. It is essentially thinking about thinking."

This awareness allowed participants to identify their strengths and weaknesses, fostering deeper self-understanding and professional growth.

Metacognition involved regulating behaviors and emotions in professional settings. Participants noted that awareness of actions and emotional responses was integral to their development.

S2-H_M linked metacognition to behavior regulation:
"Metacognition is being aware of the time you dedicate to yourself. It is about consciously implementing what you do."
S6-H_M extended this concept to emotional control:
"It is about being aware of what you can do and acting while considering the reasons and consequences of your actions."

These reflections highlight the role of metacognition in managing interpersonal dynamics and maintaining professionalism.

Participants employed metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their cognitive processes during their internships.

S3-P_L described metacognition as:
"The awareness of one's own thinking processes and the ability to control them. It includes planning what to do, monitoring progress, and evaluating oneself."
S11-P_L shared a practical example:
"When I reviewed my weekly reports, I thought about how I had done them and whether I could have done them better."

This systematic approach enabled participants to refine their practices and improve their overall performance.

Participants reported using theoretical knowledge to address challenges during their internships, showcasing the synthesis and application of knowledge.

> **S7-H_M** explained:
> *"Metacognition is synthesizing all the information we have and using it in a functional way. For example, in individual counseling sessions, we synthesize all our knowledge and select a specific theory based on the client."*
> **S8-P_L** emphasized organizing thoughts:
> *"Metacognition is thinking about our own thinking, controlling it, and understanding it in a more conceptual and structured way."*

This ability to bridge theory with practice underscores the importance of metacognitive strategies in professional training.

Self-awareness emerged as a critical metacognitive strategy, allowing participants to reflect on their capabilities and limitations.

> **S9-P_L** described metacognition as:
> *"It is the awareness of oneself. By thinking about one's thoughts, it allows individuals to view themselves from different perspectives."*
> **S12-H_M** provided an example:
> *"For instance, I realized that working with high school students suits me better than working with middle school students because high school students are more mature and composed."*

This self-awareness guided participants in their professional choices and enhanced their empathy towards others.

Metacognition played a vital role in problem-solving, helping participants develop strategies to address challenges and improve their practices.

> **S10-H_M** emphasized the importance of metacognition in problem-solving:
> *"Metacognition allows us to develop effective problem-solving strategies when faced with challenges."*
> **S7-H_M** highlighted addressing weaknesses:
> *"It increases awareness, allowing you to recognize your weaknesses and work on them while enhancing your strengths."*

This strategic approach reflects participants' ability to adapt to complex situations and improve their professional skills.

The findings reveal that prospective psychological counselors employ a range of metacognitive strategies, including self-awareness, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving, to navigate the challenges of their internships. These strategies not only enhance their professional competencies but also contribute to their personal growth. By integrating theoretical knowledge with practical applications and reflecting on their experiences, participants demonstrated the critical role of metacognition in professional development.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to explore the metacognitive thinking strategies of prospective psychological counselors enrolled in the "Guidance Practices in Schools" course and how these strategies contributed to their professional and personal development during a 12-week internship. The findings, derived from the responses to nine sub-problems, revealed a multidimensional understanding of metacognition among participants. The results highlighted the importance of metacognitive strategies such as self-awareness, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving in navigating the complexities of professional practice. Below, the findings are discussed in light of their implications for counselor education and training.

Participants consistently defined metacognition as the awareness and regulation of their cognitive processes, encompassing recognizing thought patterns, understanding learning styles, and reflecting on strengths and weaknesses, aligning with Flavell's (1979) definition of "thinking about thinking." Their reflective descriptions, such as "thinking about one's own thoughts" or "being aware of how much we know and how we learn," highlighted metacognition's role in deepening their understanding of professional responsibilities and fostering self-reflection essential for effective counseling. Metacognitive strategies were evident in their behavioral regulation and emotional control, as participants managed actions and emotions during stress, emphasizing planning, focus, and composure—key competencies in emotionally charged counseling contexts. Planning, monitoring, and evaluation emerged as vital metacognitive strategies, with participants setting goals, tracking progress, and using structured reflections, such as weekly reports, to enhance continuous learning and professional growth, aligning with Schön's (1983) concept of the "reflective practitioner." Additionally, participants demonstrated the ability to synthesize theoretical knowledge and apply it practically, bridging theory and practice by organizing thoughts and making informed decisions during counseling sessions, underscoring the need for experiential learning in counselor education. Self-awareness was a critical metacognitive strategy, enabling participants to reflect on their capabilities and limitations, guiding career decisions and fostering personal growth through insights into strengths and areas requiring further development. Problem-solving and strategy development were facilitated by metacognition, allowing participants to address challenges creatively and confidently, such as managing classroom dynamics and planning activities, enhancing their professional competence. These findings suggest counselor education programs should integrate metacognitive training, experiential learning opportunities, supportive environments, emotional regulation components, and tools for self-assessment and reflection to cultivate professional effectiveness and personal growth.

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of metacognitive strategies in fostering professional growth, emotional regulation, and adaptive learning. Participants consistently demonstrated an awareness of their cognitive processes and employed reflective practices to enhance their self-regulation and critical thinking skills. These findings resonate with Nur Hidayah et al.'s (2022) emphasis on "mind skills" as essential competencies for counseling trainees. The participants' ability to reflect on their professional roles and responsibilities highlights the importance of integrating metacognitive training into guidance and counseling education programs to enhance adaptive performance.

The study also revealed the importance of behavioral regulation and emotional control in professional settings. Participants reported using metacognitive strategies to manage emotional challenges during fulfilling tasks at internship processes, which aligns with Scandurra et al.'s (2018) findings on the role of emotional regulation and agency in clinical practice. Integrating emotional resilience training into counselor education could further support their professional growth.

Structured training programs and supervision emerged as key components in the professional development of the participants. Continuous feedback, hands-on practice, and reflective evaluations were identified as critical in building counseling skills and confidence, echoing the findings of Sabra and Daigham (2021). Their research highlighted the long-term benefits of intensive training programs, suggesting that sustained supervision and structured interventions can optimize therapeutic outcomes and support the continuous professional growth of counselors.

The findings also emphasize the role of training in enhancing professional self-efficacy, as participants reported significant improvements in their ability to manage tasks through targeted interventions. This aligns with Al-Shraifin's (2015) research, which demonstrated the effectiveness of skill-development models in increasing professional self-efficacy. Similarly, the study highlights the importance of reflective practices and targeted interventions in promoting resilience and adaptability, consistent with the developmental themes identified by Pickard et al. (2023).

This study highlights the importance of metacognitive strategies, such as self-awareness, planning, and reflection, in fostering professional growth and practical competence. Eşkisu et al. (2020) emphasize the role of structured psycho-education programs in enhancing emotional regulation and the ability to apply knowledge effectively. Both studies demonstrate the value of integrating reflective practices and experiential learning into counselor education programs to support holistic development. The relationship between metacognitive strategies and self-efficacy was further supported by Bouchkioua's (2021) findings, which highlighted the impact of training programs on improving self-regulatory skills and learning autonomy. Similarly, this study demonstrated that reflective practices and metacognitive strategies, such as planning and self-monitoring, not only enhanced participants' critical thinking but also fostered their motivation and confidence in addressing complex challenges.

Moreover, the findings align with Swanson et al.'s (2024) emphasis on reflective activities in improving learning strategies and coping mechanisms. Participants in this study reported that self-reflection was instrumental in identifying effective coping strategies, such as breaking tasks into manageable steps which helped sustain their motivation and reduce feelings of overwhelm. These findings reinforce the importance of fostering self-efficacy and motivation in educational interventions.

Coping strategies also played a significant role in managing professional challenges. The findings align with Mahomed et al.'s (2019) emphasis on structured reflection and proactive strategy training in enhancing psychological well-being and professional effectiveness. Furthermore, the study supports Alpindo et al.'s (2024) meta-analysis, which revealed a strong correlation between metacognition and critical-thinking skills, highlighting their interconnected nature in fostering higher-order cognitive abilities.

The study's emphasis on metacognitive strategies as a foundation for professional growth is consistent with Malkoç and Sünbül's (2020) findings on the role of cognitive flexibility in enhancing self-efficacy. Additionally, the alignment with Laia et al.'s (2022) SMART-based management model underscores the importance of structured, goal-oriented approaches in improving professional competencies. Participants demonstrated significant improvements in self-awareness, planning, monitoring, and evaluation, which are key components of both metacognitive thinking and the SMART framework.

Finally, the findings contribute to Abdumunem's (2022) emphasis on interactive and dynamic learning environments in enhancing metacognitive awareness. The use of synchronized lessons and reflective practices in this study provided participants with opportunities to engage in self-regulation and critical thinking, offering additional insights into the benefits observed in synchronous discussions. By asking questions about guidance practices during their internships, participants were encouraged to think more comprehensively and use metacognitive strategies more effectively. This integration of synchronized lessons and reflective practices highlights the potential to foster deeper metacognitive engagement and enhance critical thinking and self-regulation in real-world contexts.

The findings of this study demonstrate that prospective psychological counselors employ a range of metacognitive strategies to navigate the challenges of their internships. These strategies, including self-awareness, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving, not only enhance their professional competencies but also contribute to their personal growth. The 12-week internship provided participants with valuable opportunities to develop and refine their metacognitive skills. Through reflective practices, they gained insights into their strengths and weaknesses, developed effective problem-solving strategies, and applied their theoretical knowledge in practical settings. These experiences underline the importance of metacognition as a foundational skill for professional success in psychological counseling.

In conclusion, the study highlights the critical role of metacognitive thinking strategies in psychological counselor education in guidance and counseling practices at schools. By fostering self-

awareness, enhancing problem-solving skills, and bridging the gap between theory and practice, metacognitive strategies prepare students for the complexities of their future roles. The results of this study highlight the importance of metacognitive strategies in enhancing professional competencies and emotional regulation, emphasizing the need for structured training programs and reflective practices to support the holistic development of prospective psychological counselors. Future research could explore the long-term impact of these strategies on professional success and examine how they evolve with experience.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest
Authors declare that they acted in accordance with ethical rules in all processes of the research. The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this work.

Data availability
The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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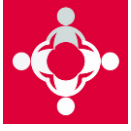
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