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Spiritual Psychology and Counseling

*Spiritual Heritage*

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## Editorial

A new issue of the Spiritual Psychology and Counseling (SPC) Journal is out once again. This issue, just like previous ones, addresses novel and interesting content areas and also contains five articles. In mentioning the classifications in this issue of the SPC, one article is on spiritual heritage, three are research articles, and one is an original article.

Kemahlı presents Ghazali, an eminent Muslim scholar, and focuses on his contributions in the areas of human existence that seem to fall within the scope of current psychology. The article has significant potential for enabling better access to his contributions for a wider audience interested in psychological studies and practices in spirituality. Summermatter and Kaya present an overview of spiritually oriented cognitive behavioral therapy, with a special emphasis on Muslim clients and practitioners. This paper can be potentially beneficial for practitioners interested in implementing this empirically validated form of psychotherapy particularly for theistic and Muslim clients.

Grimell presents an interesting longitudinal single-case qualitative study that aims to explore the psychology of transitioning from military to civilian life, adding a spiritual perspective to the transition process. The author presents an in-depth examination through a novel methodology. Ekşi and Kardaş present a unique psychometric tool for assessing spiritual well-being, presenting the results of psychometric validation. Şimşir, Boynueğri, and Dilmaç present a qualitative study on individuals with paraplegia and explore the spiritual dimensions of post-traumatic growth within this specific group. The latter two papers may also fall under the umbrella of positive psychology.

Important developments have occurred along our way to publishing the third issue with respect to the quality and acceptability of publishing. SPC has clarified its open-access policy with respect to BOAI standards. It has adopted an open form of licensing content and been accepted for inclusion in the DOAJ, a leading directory on open-access scholarly content. SPC has also been included in the Turkish Psychiatry Index, which is an important sign that SPC's interdisciplinary acceptance is increasing. These developments, among others, have strengthened our ideal to develop and maintain SPC as a high quality medium for basic and applied research within its subject areas. We, the editorial board, want to show our thanks to the authors, copy editors, and our editorial members, as well as our readers who encourage and assign meaning to what we are trying to do.

Sincerely,  
*Halil Ekşi, PhD.*





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*Spiritual Heritage*

# Four Inclinations in Human Nature: Evaluated in Light of Al-Ghazzâlî's Concept of the Heart

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## Abstract

This article examines human nature and behavior through the lens of Al-Ghazzâlî's concept of the heart (AR: qalb). The root of the Arabic word for heart means "turn, change." A great thinker of Islamic civilization, Ghazzâlî held the heart as the spiritual center of man and that whatever occurs inside it manifests itself in the outside world. Therefore, a human being attempting to know himself must first observe the emotions and minute details in the inclinations of their heart. Ghazzâlî's "heart" experiences continual change consequent to myriad forces from the physical (AR: jismânî) and the spiritual (AR: rûhânî) worlds. Therefore, it is highly difficult to observe and understand this changeable spiritual organ. Ghazzâlî's heart is the center of sentience and is home to a range of base instincts and inclinations, which Ghazzâlî terms the attributes of the heart, dividing them into four fundamental categories: animalistic/lust,<sup>2</sup> predation/anger,<sup>3</sup> divine,<sup>4</sup> and satanic<sup>5</sup> attributes. Ghazzâlî states that since these powers affect and change human nature and direct behavior, they can lead to degeneration.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, they can potentially provide an opportunity for human development and safeguard one's progeny when they are used as directed by the faculty of reason (AR: 'aql).

## Keywords

Ghazzâlî • Spiritual psychology • Concept of the heart • In clination • Impulse • Lust • Anger

## İnsan Doğasının Dört Temel Eğilimi: Gazzali'nin Kalp Kavramı Üzerinden Değerlendirilmesi

### Öz

Bu makalede insan doğası ve davranışlarının altında yatan temel eğilimlerin analizi, İslam Medeniyetinin büyük düşünürlerinden biri olan Gazzali'nin kalp kavramı üzerinden ele alınmıştır. Gazzali'ye göre kalp, insan maneviyatının merkezi terimidir ve içerisinde her ne hâsıl olursa bunu dışarıya sızdırmaktadır. Bu sebeple kendini anlamaya ve tanımaya çalışan insan, önce kalbi hisleri ve yönelimlerindeki incelikleri dikkatlice gözlemlemelidir. Gazzali kalbin, cismani âlemden ve ruhani âlemden çeşitli güçler vasıtasıyla gelen etkiler nedeniyle sürekli olarak değişime uğradığını ifade etmiştir. Bu sebeple etimolojik kökeni "dönme, değişme" anlamına geldiği bilinen kalbin gözlemlenmesi ve anlaşılmasının oldukça güç bir iş olduğunu belirtmiştir. Gazzali'ye göre insan duyarlılığının merkezi kabul edilen kalp, birçok temel güdü ve eğilimi yapısında barındırmaktadır. Bu eğilimler Gazzali'de kalbin sıfatları olarak isimlendirilmiş; hayvaniyet/şehvet ve yurtçuluk/öfke, rabbaniyet, şeytaniyet olarak dört temel unsura ayrılmıştır. Gazzali, eserlerinde insan doğasını etkileyen ve davranışlarını yönlendiren bu güçlerin çeşitli tesirlerle değişime uğrayarak tefessühlere sebep olabileceğini bildirdiği gibi aklın yönetiminde kullanıldığında insanın gelişimine ve neslin korunmasına imkân sağlayacağını ifade etmiştir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Gazzali • Manevi psikoloji • Kalp kavramı • Eğilim • Dürtü • Şehvet • Öfke

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2 Şahwah/Haywâniyyah (Arabic): Sexuality, excessive desire. Both concepts are used in this work.

3 Ğadab (Arabic): Aggressiveness. Both concepts are used in this work.

4 Rabbâniyyah (Arabic): Arrogance/Narcissism.

5 Şaytâniyyah (Arabic): Craftiness/Manipulation. Sometimes this notion is expressed with the term devilry in this work.

6 Tafassuh (Arabic): When a person, society, etc. deteriorates through the loss its particular features and qualities, to rot.

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Behavioral science is a branch of science affected by scientific findings, historical developments, and philosophical currents (Karairmak, 2004). Beginning in the period of enlightenment following the dark ages in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Western science and culture began focusing on opening the hidden doors of the human mind using rational methods. Not only was this very effort to obtain perfect knowledge and the rise of psychological theories founded on a positivist paradigm using a reductionist approach to reach objectivity and in which understanding took up the generalization of findings dominant centuries prior to the European enlightenment, so too were a variety of recommendations on the makeup and behaviors of human beings made centuries prior to this specific period by thinkers living in different geographical areas. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rising postmodern understanding began to offer significant objections to the fundamental presumptions held by the exponents of modernist thought, thereby offering an alternative to the previously dominant positivist paradigm (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). This began a transformation from a single truth to multiple realities, from individual knowledge to the mutual construction of knowledge, from a world analyzed objectively to a world constructed communally, and from a language seen as the carrier of knowledge to a language constructing local truths (Gergen & Collage, 2001). This new paradigm made apparent not only the need for the universality of both the *zeitgeist*'s<sup>7</sup> (Schultz & Schultz, 2007) and socio-psychological theories developed under the influence of a dominant culture context to be questioned, but also the need for alternative discourses to be brought to the scientific stage. Therefore, this study creates a platform to discuss new concepts and theories of people with similar psycho-social dynamics within their own system of values by exploring Ghazzâlî's analyzes on the makeup of human beings and his recommendations related to their behaviors, as he is a philosopher from within the Eastern-Islamic thought system offering alternative discourse on such issues.

### Ghazzâlî's Life

Ghazzâlî is undoubtedly one of most noteworthy Islamic thinkers to have appeared within the more than 14 centuries' worth of Islamic thought and ideas. Ghazzâlî was born in 450AH/1058AD in Tûs, a city located in the northeastern part of present-day Iran (Haque, 2004). His father, Muhammad, who worked as a wool spinner, was interested in and maintained relations with scholars of his era and individuals who strove to continue the thriving *sûfî* tradition (Uludağ, 2000). He entrusted Ghazzâlî to one of his close *sûfî* friends just before dying so that he might not be deprived of an education. Ghazzâlî spent his childhood and adolescence in the cities of Tûs, Gorgan, and Nishapur receiving a religious education in a wide variety of areas from distinguished scholars of his time. His teacher in Nishapur stated that "Ghazzâlî is

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7 *Zeitgeist* (German): The way of thinking and feeling of a specific period (Schultz & Schultz).

a deep sea” (Orman, 2000). As a result of his high achievement, keen insight, and ability to comprehend and master difficult issues, he caught the attention and won the favor of top state officials in a short amount of time and was appointed as the head professorship at Al-Nizamiyyah Madrasah of Baghdad (Watt, 1963). His work here, the lessons he taught, and the works he wrote raised him to the peak of his success, rendering the most famous scholar of his era (Attaran, 2015).

Despite the fame and success that he had attained at such a young age, Ghazzâlî left his position and Baghdad altogether to research true knowledge. During his near 10-year life of seclusion<sup>8</sup> during which period he also performed the Hajj pilgrimage (Watt, 1963), Ghazzâlî advanced in the field of Sufism/mysticism (AR: tasawwuf) (Orman, 2000) and wrote his most well-known and greatest work, *Ihyâ’u Ulûmi’-d-Dîn* (*Revival of Religious Sciences*). Later, at the request of top state officials, he returned to Nishapur, where he busied himself with education and scientific pursuits; yet his time in Nishapur ended shortly thereafter (Nakamura, 2001). Yearning for a return to a life of seclusion, he finally left his position in official education and returned to his city of birth, Tûs, where he had a madrasah constructed next to his house to teach Islamic jurisprudence (AR: fiqh) and sufiyyah.<sup>9</sup> Spending the final period of his life teaching, organizing discussion circles, reading the Qur’ân, occupying himself with *hadîth* knowledge, and worshiping God (Çağrıci, 1996), Ghazzâlî died in 1111 AD and was buried in a graveyard in the town of Taberan in Tûs (Hozien, 2011)

Dedicating his life to learning and teaching, Ghazzâlî’s works on such religious sciences of Islamic jurisprudence (AR: fiqh), discourse (AR: kalâm), philosophy, politics, mysticism (AR: taşawwuf), morality, and rational knowledge (Fahri, 2008) are among the more prominent works in the history of science and thought (Attaran, 2015). Undoubtedly, analyzing the value and of quality of man holds an important place in Ghazzâlî’s mind. According to him, human beings are endowed with a range of tools representing every single step from the lowest to the highest rank in the entire hierarchy of existence. By using these abilities in an appropriate and measured manner, man is able to attain a distinguished place among all that exists (Haque, 2004), due to his spiritually transcendental nature in comparison to other beings. One of the secrets to Ghazzâlî’s continued prominence in the field of knowledge spanning from ancient history until today is undoubtedly due to that he does not neglect man’s spiritual dimension and psychological makeup in his works (Çağrıci, 2013).

8 İnzîwâ (Arabic): Deliberately staying away from worldly affairs in order to reach a level of spiritual maturity, the process of retiring to an isolated corner away from other human beings (Akay, 2004).

9 Şûfiyyah: Name of a specific Islamic/Sufi mystical order [the name given to a group engaged in Sufi-related knowledge] (Uludağ, 2002).

## Ghazzâlî's Concept of the Heart

Ghazzâlî holds that man consists of two things (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2004). The first is our apparent (AR: *zâhirî*) form, our body, whereas the second is our spiritual side, which consists of our character (Langulung, 2002). Taking man as a whole, the most important concept that Ghazzâlî emphasizes while explaining the nature of man is his spiritual (AR: *ma'nawî*) dimension, for it contains man's psychological dynamics (Othman, 2014). Ghazzâlî analyzes man's spiritual dimension in the context of the "heart" (*qalb*), "soul/inner self" (*rûh*), "desire-natura/ego" (*nafs*), and "intellect/mind" (*'aql*) (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2004; Haque, 2004; Haque & Mohamed, 2009; Othman, 2016; Skinner, 2010). However, the differences in meaning and the details of the limits of the concepts composing our spiritual aspect are not clearly stated in the section "*'Ajâ'ib 'il-qalb*" (Peculiarities of the Heart) of his work, *Ihya' u 'Ulûmi 'd-dîn*, which instead emphasizes the importance of knowing their functions and qualities (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994).

In his explanation of man's spiritual makeup, Ghazzâlî evaluates the heart as being a superior organ that encompasses all the other concepts, rendering it the key concept (Haque, 2004). Man's heart, in its most apparent meaning, in a bio-physiological sense, carries great importance in its being the organ that circulates blood (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994; Shah, 2015). Likening it to the light emitted from a lamp (Akçay, 2005), the heart is described as the place where the *rûh* settles (Ames, 2013), which in psychological literature is conceptualized as the *soul* (Sherif, 1975). The soul changes, develops, and transforms the ego, and can also be defined as the inner self (Skinner, 2010). According to Ghazzâlî, the heart is the soul's realm (Akçay, 2005). In a concrete sense, just as this heart is found in human beings, so too is it found in animals, and even in the dead. In its second meaning however, the heart indicates an intangible organ invisible to the eyes that has a permanent relation to its bio-physiological side (Shah, 2015). And according to Ghazzâlî, it is this heart, in this spiritual/psychological sense that is the very essence of human beings (Othman, 2014). In his works, Ghazzâlî sometimes even prefers to use the term *self* for the concept of the heart (Umaruddin, 2003).

Ghazzâlî did not attempt to examine the heart in a biological sense, stating that this was a matter related to the medical sciences. Likening the fine link between the heart's biological and psychological aspects to the relation between an object and its colors or to a captain and his ship, Ghazzâlî explains his understanding of the heart's makeup and its inclinations using a variety of examples (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994).

According to Ghazzâlî, the heart is the most important faculty in pursuing knowledge, comprehending the subtleties of the tangible world (AR: *'âlemu'ş-şahâdah*), and researching reality (Çağrıci, 2013). Possessing properties of the spiritual world (AR: *'âlemu'l-ğayb*), the heart is a spiritual core (AR: *jawhar*) specially created by Allâh

(swt). For it is by means of the heart and its qualities and abilities that man may attain his superior position among all beings (Sherif, 1975). Ghazzâlî explains that man's faculty of reason (AR: 'aql), which is used to increase humanity's value and which is described as distinguishing man from other beings, is located in the heart (Umaruddin, 2003). Ghazzâlî viewed man's faculty of reason as a filter safeguarding him from the harmful thoughts of his environment and nature as well as from his own harmful impulses (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2004). Moreover, man's faculty of reason is the director of the mechanism that made decisions concerning his behaviors and preferences. Ghazzâlî grouped this spiritual faculty (AR: laţîfah) qualitatively, rated it according to its functions (Erdem, 2011), and sometimes considered it as an aspect of man's heart that performed regulatory functions (Haque, 2004).

Ghazzâlî held that it was the heart that experienced such feelings ranging from happiness to hopelessness as a result of whether the possessor of the heart performed or did not perform those actions for which he had been made responsible (Çağrıçı, 2013). While explaining the importance of the heart in his work *Minhaj'ul-âbidîn*<sup>10</sup> (trans. 2007), Ghazzâlî emphasizes that the heart is expressly different than other organs. His statement "I considered the state of the heart and saw five peculiarities not found in other organs," (p. 128) touches on the points described below.

According to Ghazzâlî, it is in the heart that two opposing poles, these being man's actions and thoughts, lie, stating that it is in the heart that the clash between doing and abstaining from an action takes place. As such, the heart finds itself in a strategic position where the inclinations found within it collide. Ghazzâlî informs us that since the heart is open to stimuli from both within and without it, both harmful thoughts and creative ideas encroach on and affect it. Describing the heart as being more energetic than a boiling cauldron atop a fire, Ghazzâlî states that the fact that the thoughts, feelings, and inclinations inside the heart change so rapidly reflects on a person's behaviors. Ghazzâlî also states that since the various potential spiritual sicknesses resulting from changes in the impulses, fruitless ideas, and delusions (AR: awhâm) experienced in the heart are both intangible and invisible to the physical eye, it is not only difficult to treat them, but also to diagnose them. As such, he asserts that the heart can only be successfully treated by spending a long period of time and a great deal of effort on it.

In explaining the above-mentioned attributes of the heart, Ghazzâlî emphasizes the importance of constructing a model in the reader's mind using a variety of metaphors and symbolic language (Ames, 2013; Watt, 2000). A few examples on the state and condition of the heart from his work *Kimiya-i Sa'âdah*<sup>11</sup> (trans. 2000) are presented below:

<sup>10</sup> Eng: Path of the Servant

<sup>11</sup> Eng: Alchemy of Happiness



“The heart is like the sultan of a city, and the body is the city. The hands, feet, and other organs are the city’s artisans, the heart’s inclinations are its officials, and one’s faculty of reason, endowed with knowledge and will, is the sultan’s vizier” (p. 18).

“The five senses as well as one’s faculties of imagination (AR: khayâl), illusion (AR: wahm), memory, the mind’s eye (AR: takhayyul), sympathy, and cognition (AR: idrâk) are the body’s soldiers. Located in the brain, each one of these faculties has its own particular duty. These internal and external soldiers are at the heart’s command. The tongue speaks and the hand moves as soon as they are commanded to do so” (p. 16).

“The sultan has need of these faculties because it is only with them that his domain may be managed effectively. In short, in order for these jobs to be performed, there must be a close link between the heart and the body” (p. 18).

“... however, in the event that the officials fail to perform their duties in a proper manner, the domain will fall into disorder, thereby resulting in the sultan falling into despair” (p. 18).

### **Changes of the Heart According to Ghazzâlî**

Emphasizing that the Arabic word for heart (qalb) is derived from the etymological root meaning “to turn/to change,” Ghazzâlî states that it is impossible for the heart to remain unaffected by influences assailing it from both the physical and spiritual realms. Ghazzâlî explains in *Ihya’u ‘Ulûmi’-d-dîn* (trans. 1994) that due to its being permanently open to internal and external influences, the heart, with its various inclinations, is open to change.

“The heart may be resembled either to a dome through whose doors its many states (AR: ahwâl) seep inward, to a target being shot by arrows from all sides, or to a set of mirrors that infinitely reflects an image placed in front of it” (p. 2241).

Ghazzâlî explains that man is completely surrounded by a myriad of physical and spiritual beings (Haque, 2004) able to enter into his heart through the facets of his temperament (AR: mizâj) and creation (Azadpur, 2003). A mark is left on the heart whenever it is subject to any type of stimulus. When a person sees, learns, or feels something, some of the heart’s inclinations begin to mobilize, others weaken in intensity, and still others group together, becoming even stronger. As a result of all of these that state (AR: hâl) sometimes transforms into action and other times continues in the form of imaginations, feelings, or thoughts, changing from one form to another and thereby causing the heart to change from one state to another (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994).

According to Ghazzâlî, of the windows opening up onto the heart, the first consist of the sense organs of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste (Shah, 2015) along with his cognitive powers of imagination, scruples, the mind’s eye, and thought,<sup>12</sup> through

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12 Analyst Reason/Baḥfî ‘Aql: The first type of the faculty of reason to appear according to Ghazzâlî. Ghazzâlî expresses that included in it are such cognitive strategies as imagination, memory, and thought, further stating that it is not possible to understand the physical world with this type of reason (Bolay, 2013).

which vehicles beings existing in the physical world turn to in order to enter the heart (Bolay, 2013). Ghazzâlî also explained that the most important external factor on the environment is the human being, who is himself affected by the conditions in which he lives, the circumstances of his era, the period in which he lives, and the area in which he was born and raised (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2000). Ghazzâlî also asserted that society also exerts an influence on the inclinations intrinsic in man's nature and that man's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are in a constant state of interaction with these inclinations (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2007).

Ghazzâlî holds that, just as it is in the physical world, it is possible for the heart to experience change by establishing a relation with the spiritual (AR: rûḥânî) world using such means as personal insight (AR: baṣîrah), power of discernment (AR: farâsah), and intuition (AR: kašîf)<sup>13</sup> (Bolay, 2013; Shah, 2015) and by being filled with elements from the spiritual world (Īnam, 2000). Furthermore, a strong relation exists between these two worlds (Aydınli, 2000). Ghazzâlî expounds on this in *Kimiya-i Sa'âdah*:

“The heart has two doors. One is the spiritual/unseen (AR: malakût) world and the other is the physical/tangible world” (p. 24).

According to Ghazzâlî, the second window opening up onto the heart is the spiritual (AR: rûḥânî) domain. One of the functions of the soul (AR: rûḥ), also called the inner self, in this domain is to transform inspiration (AR: ilhâm) and images into comprehensive thoughts and visions (AR: tamâṭîl) by means of dreams and imaginations. This reality carries a similar quality to Jung's works on archetypes. The basic aim in Jung's therapy is to reach this closed-off area of the ego (Skinner, 2010). Ghazzâlî explains that it is wrong to think that the states affected by the inclinations of the heart stemming from the spiritual world are inaccessible without sleeping or before dying, recommending that following a spiritual path and methods that include forgoing physical pleasures and eating past only what is needed to survive (AR: riyâḍah),<sup>14</sup> reflection (AR: tafakkur),<sup>15</sup> remembrance (AR: ḍikr),<sup>16</sup> and introspection (AR: murâqabah)<sup>17</sup> in order to reach this state (Ames, 2013; Azadpur, 2003; Shah, 2015). Since the period designated by philosophers and scholars as the

13 Intuitive Reason/Ḥadîṯi 'Aql: The second type of the faculty of reason to appear, according to Ghazzâlî, in which personal insight, discernment, and intuitive abilities exist. With this type of reason, it is possible to transcend into the metaphysical realm. Here the concepts of reason, heart, and soul are used as synonyms (Bolay, 2013).

14 Riyâḍah: Continuous and regular efforts spent to discipline oneself (AR: naḥs) to progress on a spiritual journey (Akay, 2004).

15 Tafakkur (Arabic): Deep thinking done to comprehend something (Akay, 2004).

16 Ḍikr (Arabic): To make mention, say, internal speech, read to oneself, remember. Also includes the meaning of worship and prayer (Akay, 2005).

17 Murâqabah (Arabic): When a person monitors his own spiritual dimension (Akay, 2004).





field of post-traditional development (Corsini & Wedding, 2011), scientists striving to give meaning to man's existence have been obliged to enter into the spiritual realm of transpersonal approaches, mythology, and tasawwuf, feeling the need to delve into such spiritual abilities, analyzes, and methods as transcendental experiences, meditation, dreams, mystical consciousness, and active imagination (Hermansen, 2001; Merter, 2014; Parsons, 2013).

Ghazzâlî strongly emphasized the importance and value of seeing the faculty of reason as having the power to control the heart's inclinations, due to its ability to make a variety of mental judgments and comparisons related not only to empirical knowledge obtained using human senses and cognition, but also to metaphysical propositions using personal insight and power of discernment (Erdem, 2012). By itself, however, the faculty of reason is insufficient to conceptualize the metaphysical world, with Ghazzâlî stating that by only using reason to solve metaphysical issues, one reaches contradictory conclusions. (Bolay, 2013; Kukkonen, 2012). For healthy development, Ghazzâlî states that when the inner self (AR: *rûh*) within the heart is supported by reason, a dynamic relationship is created in which the two organs work together to direct the person. The relation between the characteristics of a person's reason and his soul (AR: *rûh*) is classified according to that person's stage of spiritual development. In his investigations, it can be seen that while man's makeup is subject to a strict division in western psychology, this is not the case in the Islamic tradition (Skinner, 2010). The concept of reason (AR: 'aql) is used in this study according to the definitions and qualifications laid out by Ghazzâlî without these definitions and qualifications being discussed in detail, due to the constraints of the research topic.

#### **Four Fundamental Inclinations in Man's Nature**

According to Ghazzâlî, man's makeup is composed of four very different fundamental inclinations coming together in a single being (Haque, 2004). Ghazzâlî asserts that the essence of man's behaviors and attitudes depends on these four fundamental sources of motivation (Cheraghi, 2012), stating that man's heart resembles a mirror encompassing all of these effective attributes. These represent man's base instincts as well as the fundamental elements of man's nature. According to Ghazzâlî, the four attributes found in the heart are (i) animalism/lust, (ii) predation/anger, and (iii) divine and (iv) satanic attributes (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994; Shah, 2015).

Following Islamic tradition, Ghazzâlî uses the word *nafs*<sup>18</sup> for these sources of motivation, themselves being equivalent to a sort of energy containing man's base

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18 *Nafs* is an Arabic word that although literally means "self," has a usage similar, though not exactly the same, to the concept of "the flesh" in Christian theology. It is different from the word "anâ," which is equivalent to the pronoun I or *ego* as in western psychology. The Arabic root for *nafs* is related to such words as "breath" and "breathing."

instincts and primitive desires (Çamdibi, 2014). Ghazzâlî sometimes uses the word *nafs* to indicate a person's ego/personality, whereas other times he uses it to mean ego consciousness (Haque & Keshavarzi, 2014), stating that based on the ability to control these attributes, there are three *nafs* categories /levels of ego consciousness (Umaruddin, 2003). Striving for continued survival, the first and most primitive level of ego consciousness is called *nafsu 'l-ammârah* (the lower self).<sup>19</sup> At this level, the faculty of reason has very little control over the four abovementioned attributes, which are themselves without restriction or regulation. The second level of ego consciousness is called *nafsu 'l-lawwâmah* (the self-reproaching self), at which stage the faculty of reason attempts to resist and control these primitive desires and impulses. The third level of ego consciousness is called *nafsu 'l-muṭma 'innah* (the peaceful self-holistic self). At this level, the primitive impulses submit to the authority of reason, thereby causing the person to attain both freedom and peace of mind and soul (Haque, 2004; Langgulung, 1991; Skinner, 2010).

Ghazzâlî states that each person has his own unique blend of the aforementioned attributes (Haque, 2004) and that they take root according to that person's personality. Although all four of these inclinations are present in every person, some of them are stronger than others, depending on that person's personal characteristics as well as one the conditions and time in which he lives (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994). That influences from the physical and metaphysical world have the power to cause change in these sources of motivation has already been discussed in detail. Just as according to the nature of the change in question, disorders in man's nature and a variety of social problems may result, so too can these changes cause knowledge and willpower to increase, as well as other forms of human development.

It is widely held that no one before Freud emphasized the importance of either the direct or indirect effects that subconscious impulses have on man's emotions and thoughts (Schultz & Schultz, 2007). Yet Ghazzâlî explained how these inclinations can cause changes to a human being's behavior and personality traits (trans. 2000, p. 21).

You have learned that these four powers are present in your own existence. As such, control your own thoughts and behaviors so that you might see just what the inclinations that lie beneath your behaviors are. You must know for certain that in every one of your actions, a number of your heart's qualities and their effects become manifest that act together with you. For perfect morality materializes through controlling these four elements.

<sup>19</sup> *Nafsu 'l-ammârah* literally means "the commanding self," as it commands to do bad. Its full version is *nafsu 'l-ammârah bi š-sû'* and is revealed in the Qur'an in chapter 12, verse 53.



### **Animalistic/Lust Inclination**

According to Ghazzâlî, the first of these attributes in man's heart are appetite (AR: *ištiyâq*) and lust (AR: *šahwah*) (see footnote 3). Since the power of lust exists not only in human beings, but also in other beings, it is the most primitive of powers. This power has two fundamental duties. While its first duty is to serve the body through such actions as eating and drinking, its second duty is to ensure human development and continuation of the species. This power benefits man through providing the required energy for reproduction and to develop the physical body (Cheraghi, 2012; Haque, 2004).

This inclination is criticized not from an existential perspective but because it is both insatiable and selfish (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994). When the emotion of lust is not controlled by the faculty of reason through various precautionary measures, it not only leads a person to undertake harmful actions and distressful occupations, it also affects other inclinations, taking them under its control and managing how they behave (Shah, 2015). Human beings, then, exhibit an extreme propensity to food and sex, similar to that of animals (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994). Ghazzâlî informs us that man's first sin was eating from the forbidden tree in the story of Adam and Eve, a sin that stemmed from man's desire to satisfy the wants of his stomach (Shah, 2015). The sexual instinct can be shown to be the cause of such ailments as sexual dysfunction and disorders, sexual perversions, addictions, and eating disorders as well as characteristics of hedonism (Cheraghi, 2012), greed, stinginess, and extravagance (Gianotti, 2011).

Ghazzâlî asserts that an unchecked inclination of lust forces man to exert all of his energy only to satisfy his biological needs, stating moreover that an unrestrained inclination of lust weakens man's ability to reason. Unchecked by the faculty of reason, Ghazzâlî holds that this powerful inclination oppresses the individual and weakens his self-control, forcing him to act in such a way that he seeks only to satisfy his own personal desires and hindering him from involving himself in occupations truly beneficial to himself and his community (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2000).

Ghazzâlî informs us that when the powers of lust are completely done away with, order in the world may break down and that the interactions and relations (AR: *mu'âmalât*)<sup>20</sup> between people may disappear (Korlaelçi, 2012).

According to Ghazzâlî, when a person's faculty of reason controls his lusts, that person is able to reach such states of satisfaction, peace of mind and soul, elegance, and material prudence (AR: *qanâ'ah*) in addition to moderation in his sexual life and

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20 *Mu'âmalât* (Arabic): Rules such as marriage, inheritance, and trade regulating interpersonal relations. See DĪA (Diyanet Islam Encyclopedia).

powerful self-discipline (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994; 2000). Since the inclination of lust is the most powerful and severe of all man's powers (Korlaelçi, 2012), it is more difficult to control it and bring it to a neutralized state than the other impulses.

### Predation/Anger Inclination

Ghazzâlî accepts anger (AR: ġaḍab) as the second inclination found in man's nature (see footnote 4). Both the inclinations of anger and lust are found in the heart and are two powers that work to help the heart (Haque, 2004). As a result of this specific power, man is able to satisfy his fundamental need for security and protection (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994).

Ghazzâlî states that an extreme level of anger can lead a person to dangerous places. Specifically, when one is under the influence of anger, he may exhibit emotions of enmity, vindictiveness, and hatred as well as such behaviors as aggressiveness, arguing, tyranny, and murder (Awang et al., 2014; Gianotti, 2011). Furthermore, this emotion of anger can cause a person to incline toward self-punishment and self-flagellation.

According to Ghazzâlî, when this power is subject to the reason's control in a balanced manner, the possessor of the anger will be just as collected, striving, protective, decisive, and brave as he is sweet-tempered, patient, and merciful (Shah, 2015). When the power of anger is below normal, its owner becomes extremely careless and cowardly (Cheraghi, 2012).

According to Ghazzâlî, this power sometimes unites with lust, raising the banner of rebellion against the heart and taking it under their control as a slave. In this case, since like lust, when anger is uncontrolled by the faculty of reason, it causes him harm; his heart is unable to find peace and his spiritual journey is held back. When the heart finds itself in such a predicament, it must seek help from the soldiers of knowledge and willpower in the reason's army, as these two soldiers have been prepared to fight against anger and lust. Otherwise, anger and lust will continue to strengthen and, in an attempt to satisfy themselves, take over and enslave the faculty of reason (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2000). Ghazzâlî uses symbolic language to describe the relation between the powers of anger and lust and the faculty of reason.

The faculty of reason may be likened to a hunter on horseback. The power of lust is like the horse, and the power of anger is like his dog. In this regard, whenever the horseman is a master and both his horse and dog well-trained, the circumstances are appropriate for the horseman to be victorious. If however, the horseman is incapable, his horse rebellious, and his dog hunts for itself, neither does the horseman have an obedient horse that will run on his command, nor does he have a dog that will chase after prey at his signal. Such a horseman in this regard is more likely to perish than to catch the prey after which he



is chasing. The horseman's incompetence is an example of man's incompetence, lack of insight, and ignorance. The horse's rebelliousness is an example of both sexual desires and the stomach having supremacy. The dog hunting to satiate itself, however, is an example of anger having dominion over a person and completely overwhelming him (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994, p. 2183).

Describing the relationship between the faculty of reason and the inclinations of anger and lust in this simile, Ghazzâlî asserts in the event that both lust and anger are trained, they may contribute to a person reaching his created human perfection (AR: takâmul). Furthermore, just as he explains in the above example, when these two inclinations are left free without any control, a person is weakened spiritually; he warns in another metaphor that he gives in *Kimiya-i Sa'âdah* (trans. 2000, p. 19) that one should not attempt to repress or annihilate these inclinations:

The heart is the sultan of the country, which is the body. The hands, feet, and other organs are his servants. The faculty of reason is his vizier, lust is his minister of finances, and anger is his minister of security. The powers in the front side of the brain compose his chief of intelligence. All news is collected in the brain and is presented to the vizier (reason). Based on the news received, the vizier takes precautionary measures and makes preparations for the sultan's expedition. If lust, anger, and other faculties revolt against the sultan, if they do not obey him, and if they block the roads to him, one's reason will busy itself with struggling against them to discipline them. The reason does not want to kill them because the country cannot be ruled without them. The precautionary measures taken here are to force them to obey so that in a future expedition they will be friends and helpers instead of enemies, thieves, and highwaymen. If they act as friends and helpers, the person is happy and peaceful.

### **Lordly Inclination**

The third inclination giving direct to human behaviors is the lordly (AR: rabbâniyyah) power (see footnote 1). Ghazzâlî gives several verses from the Qur'ân as evidence that man has a lordly inclination in him (Janssens, 2011). While the powers of lust and anger exist in both human beings and animals, it the power of lordliness that separates man from animals (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994). According to Ghazzâlî, a person under the influence of his lordly inclination pushes him to act in an arbitrary and oppressive manner in all of his affairs, desiring that he, and he alone, have the final word while rejecting any other's interference in his management of affairs (Shah, 2015). The power of lordliness causes a person to pretend that he is superior to all others, to refrain from being humble, and to see himself as having the most knowledge and skills (Korlaelçi, 2012).

A person directed by lordly impulses wants to have authority and power over others, chasing vanity, sanctimony (AR: riyâ), pleasure, and luxury throughout his life. If he is a scholar, he desires to learn all fields of knowledge, in an attempt to prove that he

is superior to others by dint of his excessive knowledge and information. Since such people chase after praise and fame, they feel pride (AR: *ğurûr*) when it is said to them that they are processors of knowledge, whereas they feel sorrow and discontent when they are told to be unknowledgable (Cheraghi, 2012). Here Ghazzâlî again indicates that such feelings of jealousy, disdain, and selfishness also stem from the feeling of arrogance (Shah, 2015), asserting that these feelings not only serve no other purpose than to tire and busy people with pointless endeavors, but they also disrupt happiness and hinder spiritual development (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2007). According to him, these thoughts and states lead both himself and others to experience spiritual malaise, causing him to adopt a blinding ambition in which he is always comparing himself with others (Gianotti, 2011).

Just as self-love in a person can become excessive, it can also be so reduced that a person does not know the value of his existence. When self-love becomes excessive, it is called arrogance (AR: *takabbur*), whereas when it becomes excessively scarce, its possessor is considered to lack self-confidence or to have an inferiority complex (AR: *qillah*). Those who do not have this power are not aware of the value of their existence and constantly elevate others in an attempt to cause the others to love them. Ghazzâlî gives the following example to explain this situation (trans. 1994).

“A scholar who stands up when his shoe repairman enters and gives him his seat while showing him extreme respect is equivalent to him disregarding the value of his knowledge and not giving himself his proper due. This is the meaning of despicableness (AR: *qillah*)” (p. 3242).

Ghazzâlî states that the lordly inclination can accept its boundaries as a result of being disciplined by the faculty of reason. He further asserts that when this inclination is balanced, a person not only acts justly in giving others value and in knowing his own value (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994) and is also prudent and thankful, able to practice empathy, and guides others by helping them to reach their distinguished human virtues and qualities (Gianotti, 2011).

While examining human psychological disorders, Ghazzâlî includes those spiritual malaises that stem from the lordly inclination (Derin, 2012). It is understood that this power of lordliness has a role in the very foundation of many scientifically identified personality disorders, including narcissism, addiction, obsession, and the need to gain attention, as well as such emotions causing such behavioral disorders as an inferiority complex or striving for superiority. Furthermore, it is accepted that those who damage the preference and decision-making mechanism of the people with whom they frequently interact by completely disregarding their adult ego end up causing serious psychological disorders in the people with whom they interact, beginning with family members and extending to more distant relations (Öztürk, 2004).



When looked at from a socio-cultural context, people and societies under the control of their lordly inclinations are easily molded and brought to a dependent state through the dominant culture's use of a variety of forces that they use to impose their culture on them. A variety of communal and social conflicts, injustices, and oppressions in our world stem from people seeing themselves as superior in either an individual or collective sense. These sicknesses of the heart result in people abandoning themselves to unhappiness, pessimism, hopelessness, and pain (Shah, 2015).

### **Satanic Inclination**

According to Ghazzâlî, the fourth and final power that directs man's behaviors is craftiness (see footnote 2). Using the satanic (AR: šayṭāniyyah) attribute, people are able to show reality as different from what it really is (Umaruddin, 2003). A person under the influence of this power is able to manipulate those around him in order to attain his own interests. To reach his goal, a person searches out ways to deceive others and uses his faculty of reason for deceptive purposes (Gianotti, 2011). When this power unites with the other powers and splits off from reason's sovereignty, a person presents false information, masquerades as something he is not, and deceives others to achieve his goals (Derin, 2012). In explaining the satanic inclination in *Kimiya-i Sa'adah* (trans. 2000), Ghazzâlî calls this power devilry and states that its duty is to trick and deceive people. He furthermore mentions that conflicts in society as well as thoughts and actions causing spiritual malaise manifest as a result of a person's acting under the influence of his satanic inclination.

In *Ihya'u 'Ulûmi'd-dîn* (trans. 1994), Ghazzâlî states that it is the faculty of reason's duty to discover and discern the tricks of the satanic inclination. When this power's deceptive aspect is disciplined by the by the faculty of reason (Umaruddin, 2003), what is left are practical intelligence, ability, the power to control events, deep comprehension, and discerning insight that may be used for the benefit of the person (Ghazzâlî, trans. 2000). Ghazzâlî does, however, state that without this power, man is but an idiot (AR: aḥmâq) (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994).

### **Anxiety of the Heart**

Ghazzâlî states that the four aforementioned inclinations more often come together to exert influence over a person instead of acting single-handedly. He informs us that if any one of these inclinations is not under the control of person's faculty of reason, the other inclinations may easily affect that person's heart, resulting in its coming under even greater bondage (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994). Ghazzâlî also informs us that although these inclinations can never be annihilated, they can be brought into submission and transformed through the use of the power of discernment (AR: muḥâkamah),

cognitive (AR: idrâk) and interpretive abilities, true knowledge, various spiritual (AR: ma' nawî) and psychological interventions, and strong willpower (Haque & Keshavarzi, 2014).

According to Ghazzâlî, while man's power of lust leads him to excess, it is his satanic power that actually stimulates and incites both his power of lust and anger inclination. Whatever these attributes desire, they unite against the heart, forcing it to submit to and serve them. During all of this infighting, the heart's vizier (faculty of reason) must work with vigilance and deep insight to expose the satanic effect in order to undo the deception it has caused (Umaruddin, 2003). If this vizier is able to defeat lust and anger, the country's (the body) affairs return to order and justice begins to appear. If, however, the power of reason is unable to defeat lust and anger, the two overcome reason and together with the satanic power, take control of the country's willpower. In such a case, the satanic power resorts to every possible avenue to satisfy its lusts and to delight the power of anger, rendering the person a servant working solely to satisfy his own lusts and anger. In short, when one of these powers overcomes the weak faculty of reason, it causes the other powers to fall under its influence. A number of these powers unite and begin to influence a person's thoughts, ideas, and behaviors (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994).

According to Ghazzâlî, a variety of psychological disturbances and behavioral disorders may manifest as a result of the intense pressure and tension caused by subconscious conflicts in a person. In one sense, this intense conflict turns into a state of anxiety stemming the gap between the strong desire in his created human nature (AR: fiṭrah) to reach his ideal state (AR: ḥâl) and his current state. Ghazzâlî informs us that this state of anxiety may be reduced through education and discipline in proportion to the degree that the gap between these two states is closed (Haque & Keshavarzi, 2014), explaining that most people are at this state (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994). Freud states that since this subconscious conflict is without end and that people are therefore unable to reach true happiness, one must view the state of conflict as natural imperfection to reduce the pain one feels (Hutton, 1988). Recommending a number of discipline and education practices, Ghazzâlî, on the other hand, states that this conflict can indeed come to an end and that the sides can experience a state of satisfaction (AR: muṭma'in) (Langgulong, 1991).

Ghazzâlî asserts that there is nothing closer to a person than he is himself and that it is necessary for a person to first strive to know himself on this path of spiritual (AR: ma' nawî) development (Ames, 2013). He also states that it is impossible for a person who does not know himself to give meaning to others (Ames, 2013), warning that (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994):





“In this case, everyone must scrutinize his own behaviors. He must think as to why he stops, why he acts, why he speaks, and why he remains silent. If a man who sees the truth looks with an attentive eye is able to easily realize for what he is striving to achieve throughout his entire life” (p. 2185).

One of the frequently referred to concepts during the modern period is that of freedom; a free person is defined as one who makes decisions and behaves according to his own will and thoughts independent of all external influence. This definition of freedom, according to Ghazzâlî’s own understanding of the same concept, is an extremely painful situation. Ghazzâlî explains that once a person’s spiritual (AR: ma’ nawî) curtains have been lifted,<sup>21</sup> he will see very clearly that he is following the commands and prescriptions of the inclinations of the self (AR: nafsî). Thus, whenever a person wants anything from any of these inclinations, he will immediately draw up the most detailed of plans and brave the most difficult of difficulties to acquire what he wants (Ghazzâlî, trans. 1994). For this reason, Ghazzâlî explains that it is necessary for people to be freed from the authority of their own internal shackles/base instincts before rising up against the injustice and evil occurring in the external world. He is also of the opinion that it is only possible way for people’s characters to begin the process of gaining positive traits to first work on these inclinations (Ames, 2013).

Similar to Ghazzâlî’s epistemology, concept map, and view of education, his analyzes of man’s nature and behaviors also contain a theological background founded within a specific tradition (Attaran, 2015). For this reason, the emotions and behaviors that the four fundamental inclinations explained by Ghazzâlî cause may be divided and evaluated as being good/evil or beneficial/unbeneficial (Aydnli, 2000). Ghazzâlî explains that when the heart assumes control over these four powers, not only do balance and benevolence begin to manifest in the heart, so do highly developed powers of cognition (AR: idrâk) and discernment (AR: farâsah). Moreover, such attributes as tranquility, continence, responsibility, generosity, and elegance develop, which not only make it easier to control the lust and anger that exists in the heart, but that also have the power to bring the powers of lust and anger to moderation. It will also be possible to overcome the power of anger in the heart, causing this anger to transform into such emotions as perseverance, determination, forgiveness, mercy, bravery, and other similar emotions (Umaruddin, 2003).

Since the creator’s position is at the center of Ghazzâlî’s intellectual endeavors, the division of good and bad as well as beneficial and unbeneficial finds itself in a very central position in Ghazzâlî’s thought. Expressing human beings’ true happiness, this division is, according to him, based on religion (Ames, 2013).

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21 Lifting of the spiritual (AR: ma’ nawî) curtain: Grof explains this experiment in *Transpersonal Psychology* as a “holotropic state of consciousness” (Özdoğan, 2011).

## The Psychological Value of Ghazzâlî's Contributions

While following a specific framework of examination in this work, it is observed that the resources pertaining to Ghazzâlî's analysis on the nature of man benefit from contain important data. The most noteworthy of the conclusions made pertaining to the data is that the heart, as one of the accepted psychological dynamics forming man's spiritual (AR: ma'nawî) dimension, has a variety of functions as well as complementary subsystems and is able to expand its limits. This reminds us of Jung's definition of psyche (Mattoon, 2005). From the perspective that man's biological and psychological sides reflect a sensitive interaction, we see that man is home to a soul (AR: rûh), *nafs*, reason, and inclinations and that just as he has a side disposed to the physical world via his conscious functions, so too does he have a dimension disposed to the metaphysical world via his spiritual abilities. In Freud's theory, just as within the psyche there exists a conflicting relation between the id, ego, and superego (Hutton, 1988), so too does the dynamic interaction occurring in the heart's subsystems change, either voluntarily or involuntarily, the heart's characteristics thereby keeping it from remaining a static organ (Ansari, 1992). In psychoanalytic theory, the psyche that has transcended personal experiences, people, and time—known as the collective unconscious—can be interpreted as the spiritual (AR: rûhânî/ğayb) realm opening onto the heart in Ghazzâlî's theory (Skinner, 2010).

The fact that the relation between a person's realist aspect (his ego) and his id, with its uncontrolled, insistent, and illogical desires, was described by Ghazzâlî 800 years before the appearance of psychoanalytic theory using metaphors regarding the relationship between reason and inclinations needs to be properly understood and discussed. It is possible to see the similarity in between the perspectives in the following quotation.

The relationships between the ego and id may be likened to a horse and its rider. The horse supplies its rider with the energy to travel in the direction he desires. In addition to this, the horse's power must be constantly controlled or guided. Otherwise, the horse may throw the rider to the ground (Schultz & Schultz, 2007, p. 609).

According to Ghazzâlî, the relation that these four inclinations, which are themselves in a state of interaction with the soul/inner self (AR: rûh), have with reason affects each person differently depending on his ego consciousness level. The concept of *nafsu'l-ammârah*, when inclinations that are not subject to the reason's authority or control and the stage when the ego/*nafs* has only its weakest qualities at itself disposal (Othman, 2014) resembles the state where the id's makeup imposes itself on a person's conscience. Through the reason's control of the inclinations, the second level of ego consciousness (Skinner, 2010) is the *nafsu'l-lawwâmah*, at which the ego constantly criticizes, condemns, and punishes itself. During this stage, it may seem that a person's other fundamental organ, his superego, begins to interact and



interfere with the person's ego. Since in Freud's environment personal background and career were primary areas of focus, he was unable to identify a third fundamental organ related to ego consciousness in his theory. *Nafsu'l-muṭma'innah* is the name given by Ghazzâlî at this third stage (Haque & Keshavarzi, 2014; Langgulung, 1991), and according to Jung's understanding, it is at this stage that, with its balancing and regulatory role, the ego realizes its potential to send the essence of a person's character—that person's self—on a journey to become an integrated individual (Schroeder, 1992). Ghazzâlî, in a similar vein, states that this spiritual journey (AR: sayru'l-sulûk) is possible under the direction of the inner self (AR: rūḥ).

Throughout the history of western psychology, many scientists have examined what Ghazzâlî describes as the lordly (AR: rabbâniyyah) inclination with such concepts as striving for superiority, the inferiority complex (Adler, 2010), and narcissism (Freud, 2014), counting it as being among the fundamental symptoms of a number of psychological and personality disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2013, Öztürk, 2004). In his works, Ghazzâlî considered this superiority inclination to be just as valuable important in the struggle against hopelessness in human beings as he did the other inclinations, stating that it had a harmful side when unchecked and uncontrolled.

Modern psychology has yet to recognize an aspect of the mind similar to Ghazzâlî's satanic inclination. Yet, during our examinations of social life and observations of the human makeup, the effect of this inclination on relationships is at a noticeable level. In addition to observing such behaviors as lying, harming others, theft, and aggressiveness, which are both redundant and obstinate over the long term, a large number of psychological disturbances, such as antisocial personality disorder and conduct disorder in children (APA, 2013; Öztürk, 2004), are described in Ghazzâlî. Whether intellect (AR: deká) exists as an inclination within man's makeup in which a person is under the direction of such negative behaviors as deceit, lying, and slyness may be a further research subject. Ghazzâlî states that it is extremely difficult to separate the four inclinations in man's heart by looking at behaviors and that the intense pressure and tension resulting from the conflict is felt to varying degrees as anxiety and is lifelong.

### Conclusion

Ghazzâlî is accepted as a thinker whose equal has rarely been seen throughout the entirety of Islamic religious and philosophical history (Griffel, 2009). Being educated by a variety of scholars of his era provided him with variety of ideas and allowed him to develop his mental framework as an analyst (Garden, 2014). This inquisitive attitude was augmented by his curiosity and desire to search for truth, and important works in a variety of fields began to appear. The theological platform

as well as the personal views of the researchers examining him in the context of Islamic literature, together with certain works found in Ghazzâlî's oeuvre have caused him to be frequently considered within a religious studies framework. Yet the fact that Ghazzâlî's explanations and numerous discussions of human beings have maintained their relevance despite the passing of several centuries necessitate that Ghazzâlî's works be expounded upon in a more comprehensive and extensive manner by specialists in psychology.

We have observed that when psychological literature of the modern period (Freud, 2014; Jung, 2001) and Eastern/Islamic philosophical resources are examined (Ghazzâlî, 2000; Rüşd, 2004), there is a serious terminological disparity in the comparisons made in international publications (Ansari, 1992; Haque, 2004; Othman, 2016; Skinner, 2010), due not only to the fact that analyzes of the human makeup have used different names for concepts, but also that there is not an exact terminological equivalent for many, if not all of these concepts. This problem is also noticed in those sources examining and Ghazzâlî's works using a comparative approach. For this reason, researchers should transfer the meaning that Ghazzâlî attempted to express together with their original concepts and words when making recommendations and conclusions related to their field of expertise without separating Ghazzâlî's analyzes on man's nature and his spiritually oriented strategies related to the metaphysical world from their own context. In addition to this, we assert that from the perspective of scientific progress, doing so will render comparative analyzes more effective in expanding and understanding the resulting findings.

By evaluating Ghazzâlî's works from a psychological perspective, the shared subconscious values, way of perception, and both the psychological and the spiritual characteristics of an individual kneaded within a society formed from a rich cultural fabric with its own specific linguistic characteristics may be analyzed. Such an analysis of the quality of man's personality and its dimensions may lead to effective forms of treatment for psychological problems, a variety of models of education, as well as ways and methods of developing a person's personality in a holistic manner.

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Original Article

# An Overview of Spiritually Oriented Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

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## Abstract

While spirituality/religion has a healing effect for some individuals, for others it may have the opposite effect of enhancing psychological symptoms. For this reason, efforts are being made to address spirituality as a therapeutic or accelerating factor and reduce the potential negative effects of spirituality in the therapy process. The effectiveness of these applications is investigated in various studies. A comprehensive literature is being formed out of the studies conducted worldwide. Newly started studies in Turkey and similar countries are promising, but there are few coherent examples of how to address spirituality in therapy. In this article, the techniques and applications used in spiritually oriented cognitive behavioral therapy have been compiled and therapeutic applications are proposed. Ethical practices and applications specific to Muslim clients are also discussed.

## Keywords

Spirituality • Cognitive behavioral therapy • Spiritually oriented psychotherapy • Religiously oriented psychotherapy • CBT

## Manevi Yönelimli Bilişsel Davranışçı Terapiye Genel Bir Bakış

### Öz

Maneviyat/din, bazı bireyler için iyileştirici etki gösterirken, bazı bireyler içinse tam tersi olarak psikolojik semptomları artırıcı işlev de görebilmektedir. Bu nedenle maneviyatın terapi sürecinde iyileştirici veya iyileşmeyi hızlandırıcı bir etken olarak kullanılmasına ve olası olumsuz etkilerini azaltmaya yönelik çalışmalar yapılmaktadır. Bu çalışmaların etkililiği araştırmalar ile incelenmektedir. Özellikle yurtdışı çalışmalarında artan uygulamalar geniş kapsamlı bir literatürün oluşumuna doğru yol almaktadır. Türkiye ve benzer ülkelerde ise yeni yeni başlayan çalışmalar umut vericidir; fakat maneviyatın terapide nasıl kullanılacağına dair uygulama örnekleri azdır. Bu makale kapsamında bilişsel davranışçı terapi özelinde uluslararası literatürde yer alan manevi yönelimli terapi uygulamaları incelenmiş ve bu araştırmalarda kullanılan teknikler derlenerek terapötik uygulamalar tanıtılmaya çalışılmıştır. Ayrıca etik uygulamalar ve Müslüman danışanlarla yapılan çalışmalara da yer verilmiştir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Spirituality Maneviyat • Bilişsel davranışçı terapi • Dini yönelimli terapi • Manevi yönelimli terapi • BDT

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Before proceeding to religiously/spiritually oriented cognitive behavioral therapy practices, it may be useful to examine the concepts of religion and spirituality. Knowing what these concepts mean to people, can provide a basic perspective to the therapist, aiming to address these phenomena in therapy sessions. From an examination of the literature, however, it is not so easy to define the concepts of religion and spirituality though these are part of our everyday life. Hill et al. (2000) describe religion as a belief system characterized by a general agreement on faith and worship in community and the existence of traditional actions. Muslim scholars regard religion as not only encompassing faith but also including moral, legal, and social rules that are to guide the worldly life (Harman, 1994). Another fundamental characteristic of religion is that it creates a social union among those who share the same belief and is born out in people who adopt the same forms of behavior. A religious person is a member of both the religious community and the society in which he lives so that he has to comply with the requirements of faith on the one hand and the rules of the community on the other (Polanski, 2003). The common points of all of these definitions is that the religion contains rules governing human life, organizes social life, and makes individuals into a community based on their beliefs. Do people develop systems of religious belief simply in order to create a community and feel safe? If we answer yes to this question, we may be describing religion only within the framework of norms and regulations. Yet, people refer to various positive feelings when describing their religious beliefs. These feelings, often called spirituality, elevate religion above the systems humans build for living together such as government, law, and economy. Spirituality is a phenomenon unique to human beings. This phenomenon is incorporated within religion for some individuals but not for others, either directly or through their application (Polanski, 2003). In this case, it is useful to look separately at definitions of spirituality. Spirituality is the desire to connect with and be close to the sacred. Spirituality leads to the experience of a natural intimacy containing curiosity and admiration. Although there is no agreed upon definition of spirituality, Worthinton & Aten (2009) suggests four types of spirituality:

- i. *Religious spirituality* is defined as feeling the sanctity and affinity that is defined by a particular religion. In many cases, it is based on the sense of feeling close to God or a higher power.
- ii. *Humanistic spirituality* is characterized by the feeling of commitment to humanity, being close to or caring for a larger group of people. Often it is reflected with love, devotion, and sacrifice.
- iii. *Nature spirituality* is defined as the feeling of being connected with the environment or nature, such as when a person witnesses a beautiful natural scene with awe and wonder.
- iv. *Cosmos spirituality* is characterized by a sense of connectedness with creation, such as when contemplating the boundaries of the cosmos.

As can be seen from all these definitions, spirituality can be understood as the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of a person relating to the sacred. The establishment of a relationship with holiness may not always require a formal religion, but many people realize their spirituality through a religion. This condition, called religiosity, is identified with spiritual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with a more formal organization defined as religion. For many, holiness, or the sacred, corresponds to God, which is defined as a great power. But, besides this, people continue to search for holiness within a larger context, with or without awareness, even when they may reject traditional religious identities, and this plays a critical role in the lives of these clients (Pargament, 2007; Pargaments & Saunders, 2007). There is a wide overlap between the concepts of religion and spirituality that should be remembered even if they are defined separately in order to facilitate the understanding of spirituality and religiosity (D'Souza & Rodrigo, 2004). Since spirituality can coexist with religion to a large measure, but can exist without religion as well, only the concept of spirituality will be used to cover both concepts instead of using them separately hereinafter.

### **Reasons for Addressing Spirituality in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

Gender, ethnic identity, age, family, friends, and social and cultural context influence the client's perspective on the world. Clients do not enter psychotherapy in isolation; rather, they bring with them more than just their own selves. At this point, it is especially important to emphasize spirituality. Modern life emphasizes spirituality as a subjective, inner, and private experience (Pargament, 2007). Yet, spiritual beliefs shape how individuals perceive events and the world, and thus their behavior. For example, individuals who grow up in cultures where spiritual goals are very strong may focus on whether they are living "the right life" that is nourished from spiritual sources rather than material ideals. Similarly, people may express behaviors unique to their own spiritual milieu, such as suicide as a form of self-sacrifice in India or Japan, which is difficult for an individual living in Western societies to understand (Sue & Sue, 2008).

New developments in research and psychology have changed our perspective on the human and human experience. One of these changes is the increasing recognition of the positive and negative effects of spirituality on a person's mental health and the testing of its functioning in the therapeutic processes. Religion is beginning to become a key to therapy for some clients rather than an excluded process. In recent years, many books on the use of spirituality in clinical practice and therapy processes have been published. Spiritual practices are integrated into secular approaches, such as the cognitive behavioral approach and the humanistic approach, along with spirituality-oriented approaches, like pastoral counseling, and transpersonal therapy, and the effectiveness of these applications is being tested (Sperry & Shafranske, 2007). This literature



reveals that spirituality has an important place in the mental health of a person, and that its use in therapy has positive results. For example, [Rosmarin, Auerbach, Bigda-Peyton, Björgvinsson, and Levendusky \(2011\)](#) in their research on a Jewish and Christian sample found out that as the level of trust in God increased, tolerance of anxiety, uncertainty, and ambiguity increased, and vice versa. In addition, researchers have found that in groups with low trust in a deity or God, interventions aimed at raising this trust increase tolerance levels for uncertainty and anxiety. [Rosmarin et al. \(2011\)](#), in another study, found that for almost all of the cases in which spiritual thoughts related to the symptoms of the clients were investigated, spirituality is seen as a protective resource, including as a coping mechanism against negative stress, and as symptoms worsen, behavioral and cognitive distancing from beliefs is also seen. Likewise, several studies have shown that spiritual thoughts and behaviors of clients may have supportive effects for solving their problems though sometimes they may have a worsening effect on existing problems or be the very cause of the problems ([Braam, Klinkenberg, Galenkamp, & Deeg, 2012](#); [Cole & Pargament, 1999](#); [Pargament, Zinnbauer, Scott, Butter, Zerowin, & Stanik, 1998](#); [Snodgrass, 2009](#); [Weber & Cummings, 2003](#)).

Religious thoughts and behaviors have important roles in both relieving psychopathological symptoms and contributing to them in not only Christian or Jewish populations but also in religious Muslims. In some clinical trials on religious Muslim clients, clinical recovery has shown to be accelerated by the addition of religious-oriented psychotherapy techniques to secular treatments ([Vasegh, 2009](#)). [Azhar, Varma, and Dhorap \(1994\)](#) and [Razali, Aminah, and Khan \(2002\)](#) have shown that the use of standard cognitive behavioral therapy and spiritual techniques together accelerate the improvement of religious Muslim counselors who have been diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder. Similarly, [Azhar, and Varma \(1995\)](#) found that clients who suffered losses and received religious-oriented psychotherapy recovered faster than the control group receiving only standard psychotherapy. When all these studies are examined, it is seen that spirituality is related to all aspects and expressions of human behaviors in positive and negative senses and emotions and experiences; further, it has two important effects in terms of clinical applications. First, spirituality is a potential resource for solving people's problems, and second, spirituality can be the source of the problem.

Feeling anger at God, clashing with the congregation or the class of the priesthood, spiritual dilemmas, confusion, and guilt are risk factors that negatively affect physical and mental health ([Paloutzian & Park, 2005](#); [Pargament & Saunders, 2007](#)). The forgiveness of God, the conviction that everyone can commit sins, that people are not perfect, and that God is always with them, on the other hand, can also give strength and flexibility to the person ([Vasegh, 2009](#)).

A spiritually oriented cognitive behavioral psychotherapy approach assumes that the problems that the client brings in and the solutions to these problems are best understood as embedded in the larger social and cultural context, which includes spiritual beliefs. Pargament (2007) has classified the therapeutic use of spirituality as originating from the client, the therapist or the process. The reasons for using spiritually oriented therapy based on the needs of the client are:

- i. If the client has strong spirituality, they cannot leave it out of the session.
- ii. Problems related to spirituality can cause psychological problems.
- iii. Psychological problems can cause spiritual problems.
- iv. Spirituality can be a good resource for solving problems.
- v. Spirituality can be a source of resistance to solving the problem.

The greater social, cultural, and/or religious context of the client can bring her to therapy. Reasons for addressing spirituality due to therapist needs are:

- i. The therapist cannot exclude his spiritual beliefs from the session.
- ii. Involving spirituality in sessions depends on the therapist's professionalism in spiritually oriented therapy.
- iii. Spiritually oriented psychotherapy requires the therapist's literacy and competence. This includes spiritual knowledge, openness, tolerance, self-awareness, and authenticity.

The reasons for adopting spiritually oriented psychotherapy to enrich the process are:

- i. Psychotherapy has a spiritual dimension.
- ii. The spiritual point of view of the therapist and the client affects the therapy.
- iii. Psychological and spiritual changes take place together even when sacredness is not a direct focus point.
- iv. Techniques are enriched by explicitly focusing any therapeutic method on a dimension of spirituality.
- v. Addressing spirituality may enable new perspectives on and solutions to psychological problems.

### **Basic Concepts of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and the Use of Spiritual Techniques**

When spiritually oriented cognitive behavioral therapy practices are addressed, it appears that spiritual practices are integrated into the standard therapy approach.



For this reason, it may be useful to take a look at the general concepts of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is an active, time-limited, current-time-oriented, structured approach that is based on cooperation between the client and the therapist, intervenes in consciousness, and is used in the treatment of psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, phobias, and pain (Beck, 2005; Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979; Corey, 2013). In this approach, it is assumed that the basis of the psychological problems is the inaccurate functioning of the cognitive processes. The main focus is on bringing about change in the cognitive processes for attaining the desired changes in behavior and affection, and the client's responsibility to take an active role in the therapy process is emphasized. The therapist uses various cognitive behavioral techniques to generate change, and the client is provided means to test this cognitive change (Corey, 2008). According to this approach, the cognition of the person flowing through the verbal or image forms is the basis of his perceptions and attitudes and is formed by previous experiences. The structures that constitute these basic perceptions are called "schemas" or "core beliefs." For example, a dominant schema such as "I have to do everything perfectly, or I am a failure" can be effective in creating goals and interpreting experiences (Beck et al., 1979, p. 3; DeRubeis, Webb, Tang, & Beck, 2010). CBT does not claim that the clients create their emotional problems only in their heads. According to CBT, some people may get worse in response to adverse events, for example, in the case of a theft, as thoughts and beliefs may detract from the ability to cope constructively. For example, the individual may not feel safe at home despite numerous security measures (Neenan & Dryden, 2015). The most fundamental therapeutic activity in CBT is the evaluation of these cognitions that are incompatible and not helpful to the client. After the client becomes able to identify ideas or images associated with negative emotions, she systematically examines the validity of her ideas, develops alternative perspectives, and tests them behaviorally (Wenzel, Brown, & Beck, 2009, p.104).

The therapist tries to create cognitive change in the client by experimenting with every possible way to provide a lasting change in the client's feelings and behavior (Beck, 2001). However, the important point to be considered here is that clients come to psychotherapy not because they do not think rationally but because their feelings, behaviors, and social relations cause distress. For this reason, two basic points should not be omitted. First, thoughts and feelings are separate entities; and thoughts affect feelings and behavior. Second, therapists do not discuss feelings, but only discuss the thoughts that lead to these feelings (Leahy, 2008). Beck (2005) briefly outlined the goals of cognitive therapy as: (1) to know what they think, (2) to determine which ideas are distorted, (3) to search for arguments and evidence for questioning reality, (4) to bring forth possible alternatives to the wrong judgments, and (5) to receive feedback to inform oneself on whether the changes are correct or not.

Although this cognitive model states that the mechanism underlying all psychological disorders is the client's dysfunctional thoughts that affect the mental state and behavior (Beck, 2001), Leahy (2004) emphasizes that experienced cognitive therapists should not approach each client with the same solution. According to him, the therapist should make a subjective conceptualization for each case, taking into account the cognitive schemes regarding the client's particular situation, coping styles, and social reality. As mentioned above, the client is applying for therapy because of deteriorations in his daily life. In this sense, it can be important to consider the social structure and spiritual beliefs that the client has. It should not be forgotten that some of the client's problems may be based on these spiritual beliefs, or that his spiritual life can support him in overcoming difficulties. Thus, religious beliefs can be central for the therapist in choosing the treatment of religious clients (Azhar, Varma, & Dharop, 1994).

Some research shows that the use of spirituality in therapy can help religious clients. Barrera, Zeno, Bush, Barber, and Stanley (2012) state that spiritual beliefs and practices, together with a supportive environment, may improve coping with stressful life events and help depressed people find hope and meaning. But what should be noted here is that these beliefs should not make people feel guilty, though some cultures or religious beliefs can have high standards of behavior. The fear of making mistakes with regard to these high standards can cause a person's courage to break and bring on feelings of guilt. For this reason, it should be carefully examined whether spiritual factors increase or decrease depression. The therapist must determine whether the spiritual resources are an obligation or a source of "nutrition" for the client.

Spiritually oriented CBT follows the same process defined for secular CBT except that it uses religious beliefs and worship to encourage the client to change his or her mind and behavior (D'Souza & Rodrigo, 2004; Koenig, 2012; Tan & Johnson, 2007). Standard CBT practice is performed at each session of a spiritually oriented CBT application, and prayer and sacred practices are integrated only when it is believed to be appropriate and helpful for the client. For example, the client may need to discuss feelings of guilt or punishment for their sins, the existence of religious suspicions, or the emotional and cognitive aspects of their beliefs. In this sense, in order to review the client's false or distorted thinking, all religious sources, such as sacred books and religious leaders, can be used as resources for therapy (Tan, 2007).

Tan (1996) proposes two models for the integration between spirituality and psychology: explicit (overt) and implicit (covert; as cited in Tan & Johnson, 2007). In the implicit orientation, issues related to religion or spirituality are not discussed directly and are not systematically included in the process. Rather, their integration is



covert and indirect. In the explicit orientation, issues related to religion or spirituality are handled more directly and systematically; and religious resources such as praying, reading sacred books and religious texts, religious experiences, going to places of worship, or joining in congregational worship can be used directly. The choice of which of these models to follow depends on the client's attitude and the therapist's knowledge and experience. For this reason, there are two questions that must be answered before using religious techniques in therapy. First, is religion an important source of conflict as part of the client's problems? For example, if feelings of guilt regarding a religious issue play an important role in the client's anxiety or depression, it may be useful for the therapist to dedicate time to help the client resolve these feelings. If the problem is a specific phobia, on the other hand, religious techniques are likely to be less helpful for the client (Vasegh, 2009).

The second and more important question is what is the significance of a religious/spiritual technique for the client? For example, if a Muslim client has a negative attitude towards using religious scriptures or praying at counseling sessions, trying to use spiritually-oriented techniques during counseling can lead to resistance and negative emotions. In the same client, for example, techniques that can connect the client with God such as praying secretly and alone or reading the Qur'an can be more effective. In order to decide which methods to use in counseling, it would be helpful to hear the client's religious story and to gather information about the attitudes towards the use of these techniques in therapy in the first session (Vasegh, 2009). For this reason, in the first session of therapy, it is necessary to discuss these issues with the client before using techniques such as prayer and religious reading.

This interview in the first session should include the client's story, the problem list, and the list of goals that s/he wants to accomplish, just as in the practice of secular CBT, along with spiritual issues such as the client's spiritual background, denominational status, and whether there are any drawbacks to using practices such as prayer and religious reading in therapy. Tan (2007) noted that the first interview in which all of this content is obtained could last about two hours. If the client responds positively and confirms that s/he is informed (this can be done either verbally or in writing), then religiously/spiritually oriented CBT can be used.

### **Examples of Spiritually Oriented CBT Practices**

CBT is a powerful approach in the treatment of religious clients who come with spiritual/religious problems because of its characteristics. The first of these features is the focus of CBT on the evaluation of people and the basis of their thinking. It is easy for highly religious and traditional clients to use a thought-oriented language and to share their assumptions about the combination of behavior and emotions. Second, CBT's emphasis on homework and learning does not seem foreign to many

religious people who engage in religious activities (such as praying) and reading the sacred texts. Finally, religious people should be able to understand that they must work hard to achieve the change in attitudes and behaviors that CBT offers, given that, in the major traditional religions, stories and doctrines emphasize changes in thinking, attitudes, or behavior achieved through significant pain and suffering (Tan & Johnson, 2007).

In fieldwork studies, it is seen that spiritually oriented CBT is not limited solely to individual sessions. For example, in Wong-McDonald's (2007) study, spiritually oriented CBT was applied to clients involved in psychosocial interventions with serious psychiatric difficulties, through such methods as praying, talking about God's forgiveness and love, and listening to religious music, while classical CBT was used for a control group. According to the results of the study, the clients who received spiritually oriented CBT attained therapy goals at significantly higher levels and had higher levels of well being during the three-year follow-up period. In another study, individual interviews were planned as modules (Barrera, Zeno, Bush, Barber, & Stanley, 2012). Cognitive behavioral therapy was also applied in modules with twelve 40-minute sessions of therapy. In the first three sessions of this practice, the main components were informing about the structure and formation of anxiety through the use of awareness, motivational speaking, values assessment, deep breathing techniques, and relaxation techniques. In the following sessions, the client had the option to proceed with spiritually oriented psychotherapy. For the remaining eight sessions for these clients, modules with spiritually oriented techniques were selected with the therapist. Techniques such as behavioral activation, confrontation of anxiety, forgiveness of self and/or others, sleep regulation, problem-solving, deep muscle relaxation, and cognitive restructuring are applied by integrating spiritual practices in these selectable modules. Every week, telephone interviews are held to evaluate how the exercises and the homework are going. During the last CBT session, the skills are reassessed, and in the following weeks, the general progress of the counselor is assessed by telephone and follow-up interviews.

Good (2010) structured a religiously oriented CBT application for depression treatment consisting of 12 sessions. Spirituality and religious beliefs are integrated into the techniques of classical CBT for the treatment of depression, which include reward and activity planning, the discovery of the link between automatic thought and emotion and behavior, guided discovery and Socratic questioning, identifying cognitive distortions, relaxation, evidence analysis, and creating alternative thinking (Beck, 2005; Beck et al., 1979; DeRubeis et al., 2010). These spiritual techniques included Christianity-based meditation, using hymn chants, reciting a prayer that is prepared in line with the needs of the client and designated as homework at the end of each session, being present in depression, revising beliefs about God and spirituality, as well





as the negative triad of self, others, and the future that typically exists in depression, talking about the positive effect of faith in treatment, determining spiritual coping strategies, working on the pain, and discovering barriers to forgiveness, using spiritual resources and stories to organize cognitive distortions, working on verses about God's forgiveness, discussing unconfessed sins, and using resources for spiritual purification.

### **Techniques Used in Spiritually Oriented CBT**

When studies on spiritually oriented CBT are reviewed, it appears that the methods of classical CBT are the basis of therapy. Spiritually oriented techniques are integrated into these classical techniques, taking into account the needs and symptoms of the client. In the studies examined, the spiritual methods are generally as follows (D'Souza & Rodrigo, 2004; Good, 2010; Rosmarin et al., 2011; Tan & Johnson, 2007):

- i. Discussing dysfunctional, disturbing and self-destructive thoughts through religious texts and recording thoughts and behaviors.
- ii. Reading religious texts, praying or using religious images to reduce anxiety and to make the client feel better, either during counseling sessions or as a complement to cognitive homework assignments.
- iii. Redefining cognitive beliefs through spiritual beliefs and trying to change the client's perspective with arguments such as "we are never alone; nothing is impossible; life is a test; we can only control the process, not the end; nothing is permanent."
- iv. Helping clients to recognize their gratitude and to remember their blessings.
- v. Following religious rituals such as praying and religious meditation with recordings or diary keeping and evaluating their effectiveness.
- vi. Use of religious music.

In spiritually oriented CBT practice, reading religious books and praying for relief can help religious clients by reducing anxiety. Meditation can also be used as a successful technique in relieving clients. Praying is a different form of meditation. For this reason, it can be structured as a natural part of therapy (Azhar et al., 1994). A therapist may suggest ways for a client to calm himself and make himself feel safe before going to bed, such as praying, meditation, short spiritual readings, imagining, or listening to calming spiritual music if it is appropriate for the particular client (Barrera et al., 2012).

**Spiritually oriented relaxation techniques.** In deep muscle relaxation exercise, the therapist wants the client to focus on a spiritual image or word. During a relaxation

exercise, the therapist can ask the client whether the spiritual things he imagines make him feel peaceful. The client then chooses the spiritual word or image that calms him down most effectively (Barrera et al., 2012). Wachholtz and Pargament (2008) found that, among the different forms of meditation, spiritually oriented meditation was more effective than other meditation techniques in reducing negative moods and anxiety levels, bringing about more intense spiritual emotions, and better coping with migraine attacks in patients with migraine problems. The meditation process also involves stopping negative thoughts and distracting attention from anxious thoughts. The clients can relax themselves by taking deep breaths while reading the holy books or focusing on their preferred spiritual word or image (Barrera et al., 2012).

**Developing acceptance and gratitude skills.** The therapist may suggest to the client that keeping certain spiritual thoughts in mind, such as “I am not alone,” “A greater power will help me cope with my problems,” “Only God can know what will happen in the future,” can help him/her. The client may adopt these thoughts as suggested by the therapist or may create alternative ones for himself (Barrera et al., 2012). Spiritual resources can help a person who is buried in such processes as identification, relationships, and finding meaning in situations like cancer, where people get closer to death, which leads to the emergence of existential worries. In such cases, the methods to be applied should ensure that the client focuses on one of two aspects of control over life. The first is to focus on things that are under the control of the individual, and the second is to focus on things that are beyond control. Such an intervention would look like this: the therapist draws two circles on a paper, one representing “under my control” and the other representing “under God’s control.” Then the client is asked to write his concerns and problems in the appropriate two places. What the client writes is afterwards elaborated and discussed in the session. If the client has inappropriate placements, it is decided where the appropriate place is. As a final step, how the client can cope with the problems he places in the area controlled by God in alignment with his faith is discussed. This exercise can also be applied in groups (Rosmarin et al., 2011).

Rosmarin et al. (2011) developed a religiously oriented CBT application aimed to help the client become able to identify things to be grateful for and to think about things that are very valuable in the client’s life, such as feelings, the health and ability of the physical body, or family members, especially children. Then the client is given a few seconds to think on these. After this time of thinking, the therapist says, “Imagine that what you value very much is not in your life, though it may not be very pleasant for you,” and the client is given time to think again. Finally, the client is given the opportunity to consider what they have with fresh eyes as follows: “Now imagine that all this is a gift given to you and that all these gifts are made to make you feel happier and lead a better life.”



Again, in the same research, the clients were asked to think about a stressful event that they had experienced in the past that had turned out better than expected. The conclusions “Any event that is better than you expect is enough” and “It does not have to be a miracle” are given, and a few seconds are given to the client for thinking. Then the following question is formulated: “Try to imagine how you felt after this stressful event was resolved. Try to remember the stress you experienced. What did you expect about this situation that you were worried about?” Then the therapist asks, “Is there any opportunity to raise your belief in this case now? What did you endure in this stressful situation? How did you get out of this situation? I want you to think about these questions.” The clients are allowed to share their experiences and are empowered to resort to these skills so that they can use them to manage similar stressful situations that they may encounter in the future. Researchers indicated that in each exercise the clients expressed greater levels of happiness, gratitude, and hope.

Clients are given suggestions of behaviors to include in their “spiritual daily lives,” such as daily worship, reading religious books, or participating in religious activities. It may also be desirable to make a list that reminds the client of “what they are grateful for.” The therapist may support the client in the creation of this list by asking, “If you prayed, would you pray for the kind of blessings that you already have in your life?” (Barrera et al., 2012).

**Recognizing spiritual cognitive distortions.** All religious people, from time to time, may have doubts and worries about things such as whether they have committed sin, performed a religious ritual correctly, or made genuine repentance. In general, people consider such thoughts and suspicions reasonably and are able to make logical decisions about whether there are things that need to be corrected. Some individuals, however, are subject to incorrect evaluations characterized by excessive doubt, which leads them to incorrect conclusions. Sometimes intense feelings of guilt can be associated with thoughts of being unbelievers or sinners. This situation increases their anxiety, making it difficult to engage in religious rituals, and can turn into religious obsession, such as trying to control thought, thought-action fusion, perfectionism, and intolerance of uncertainty. Often these people engage in a self-limiting struggle to control their unwanted thoughts of sin, punishment, and disrespect. As clients try to control these ideas more and more, they experience an increase in confused or uncontrolled thoughts (Vasegh, 2009). This struggle, which causes stress, is partly rooted in the belief that “bad thoughts are as immoral as bad behavior” (Purdon & Clark, 2013). Yet Muhammad (pbuh) taught people that they would not be punished for their thoughts unless they cast their ideas into action. Sometimes religious obsessive thoughts can also be seen as a strong sign of faith (Vasegh, 2009). These beliefs can be debated by sharing this knowledge with the counselor and cognitive distortions can be revised.

In the practice of spiritually oriented CBT, some special applications can be used for clients who have distorted religious thoughts. One of these is the use of religious books and religious evidence to test the validity of their self-destructive and irrational beliefs. In addition to this, interventions such as using religious images, praying in sessions, or religious readings to reduce the anxiety of the client are techniques that can be used as complements to cognitive homework assignments as well as during sessions. For example, if a client who struggles with low tolerance of frustration is disappointed that God does not respond to his prayer can be asked: “Do you have good evidence that God will not answer?” In this specialized form of discussion, the therapist can discuss the religious ideas and practices that are incompatible with the client’s self-defined religion, unique to the client, or non-functional. For example, a therapist might share the verse “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage” [John 16:33] with a Christian client with low tolerance of frustration as contradictory evidence for her thoughts leading to lower frustration tolerance. Sometimes clients can misunderstand religious writings or read them in a biased manner by focusing on certain parts (Tan & Johnson, 2007).

The cognitive therapist can also ask the client how the spiritual system of thought affects problem solving. For example, the therapist may ask the client how the greater power has a role in ones problem solving. The client may be asked, “Will you and the great power you believe in solve the problem together?” and the answers are discussed. In addition, when the therapist realizes that the client’s cognitive distortions are due to lack of religious knowledge, he may suggest that it may sometimes be helpful to talk to religious leaders to solve certain problems or to find solutions by reading religious texts (Barrera et al., 2012).

**Helping clients cope with losses.** In general, clients with loss may feel sad when they have an intense desire for situations that cannot be reached, as evidenced by statements such as “if only my wife were still alive” or “It is terrible to be diabetic.” Clients’ belief in an afterlife in which they will have a better life may help them to better cope with these inimitable wishes or inevitable losses (Vasegh, 2009). Çünkü dua ederek Tanrı’ya başvurma, olayların sonuçlarını Tanrı’ya havale etme, sıkıntılar karşısında sabırlı olma, aileye yardım etme gibi davranışların ahirette ödüllendirileceğine inanmaktadır. Many people believe that acts such as praying to God, attributing the consequences of events to God, being patient with troubles, and helping others will be rewarded in the hereafter (Vasegh, 2009). The belief that patience in the face of troubles will be rewarded, or that all of life is a test, may increase their power to cope. For example, therapists can help disabled people partly improve their positive emotions and cope better with their situations by addressing spiritual power in their lives. Spiritual thoughts can be a source of support for both clients and those looking after them (Sue & Sue, 2008).



**Coping with feelings of guilt and hopelessness.** Criminality is as natural and sometimes beneficial as other negative feelings. For example, people with antisocial personality disorder feel guilt at lower levels, which are not strong enough to prevent them from inflicting violence on their victims. On the other hand, feeling very intense guilt is the most important cognitive component of depression. Feeling guilty can negatively affect the self-confidence in depressed clients thereby causing anxiety, unhappiness, disruptive behaviors, and fears of being punished in the future in this world of religious clients. Religious depressive clients may sometimes focus selectively on God's punishment and this can increase their feelings of guilt. These clients can be guided to direct their attention to hope-instilling verses and religious texts that emphasize that God is forgiving (Vasegh, 2009).

Some of the verses in the Qur'an can be discussed with Muslim clients to work on religious cognitive distortions. Verses such as the following can be discussed to support the client's awareness of religious cognitive distortions that cause them to feel despair:

“And if Allah should touch you with adversity, there is no remover of it except Him. And if He touches you with good - then He is over all things competent. (Qur'an 6:17<sup>1</sup>)”

“There is not upon those who believe and do righteousness [any] blame concerning what they have eaten [in the past] if they [now] fear Allah and believe and do righteous deeds, and then fear Allah and believe, and then fear Allah and do good; and Allah loves the doers of good.” (Qur'an 5:93).”

“And we will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, “Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided. (Qur'an 2: 155, 156, 157)”

Or the following verses can be elaborated on with a desperate client and the importance of patience without falling into despair can be discussed:

“And when We let the people taste mercy, they rejoice therein, but if evil afflicts them for what their hands have put forth, immediately they despair. Do they not see that Allah extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]? Indeed, in that are signs for a people who believe. (Qur'an 30: 36, 37)”

Some Muslim clients do not commit suicide because suicide is considered a grave sin. Promoting such ideas can be helpful in psychotherapy. One of the greatest sins mentioned in the Qur'an is the cessation of hope in the mercy of Allah. At this point,

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1 In this paper, Qur'anic verses are taken from the translation known as the Saheeh International translation (2011, *The Quran: English Meanings and Notes*. Riyadh: AlMuntada) which is retrievable from <https://quran.com/>.

it is important to note that some clients nevertheless consider suicide because they are very desperate, and the belief that hopelessness is a great sin can increase their despair and guilt even more (Vasegh, 2009).

The following verses can be discussed with the client to talk about God's forgiveness as well as how the client can forgive herself and overcome her sense of hopelessness:

“Whoever should think that Allah will not support [Prophet Muhammad] in this world and the Hereafter - let him extend a rope to the ceiling, then cut off [his breath], and let him see: will his effort remove that which enrages [him]? (Qur'an 22:15)”

“Then, indeed your Lord, to those who have done wrong out of ignorance and then repent after that and correct themselves - indeed, your Lord, thereafter, is Forgiving and Merciful. (Qur'an 16:119)”

The following verses can also be supportive while talking about the client's feelings of guilt and hopelessness:

“Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good. And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know. (Qur'an 3:134,135)”

As an example for spiritually oriented CBT interventions, Vasegh, utilized Socratic questioning technique with a female Muslim client in an effort to reduce feelings of guilt (2009). In this practice, the therapist emphasized the notion in the Qur'an that, even if one sins, if she repents and makes an effort to make up for the sin, she will be rewarded with great forgiveness of God. In this example, the client's feelings of guilt and despair were questioned through her experiences and combined with the knowledge of the Qur'an, enabling her to rethink her cognitive religious distortions.

### **Spiritually Oriented CBT with the Elderly**

Especially towards the last stages of life, older clients can apply therapy to address problems regarding reassessment of life, death, and hopelessness. There are some points to be aware of when practicing spiritually oriented CBT with older religious clients, and especially with religious counselors who have cognitive and physiological difficulties due to their age.

Several interventions have been proposed in the literature on this specific group of clients who have cognitive and physiological difficulties due to their age. Snodgrass (2009) applies the following steps in her spiritually oriented CBT approach to older individuals:



Snodgrass (2009) applies the following steps in the spiritually oriented CBT approach on elderly people. At the first meeting, the client's story is conceptualized within the CBT framework and terminology with reference to the client's age, demographic characteristics, family structure, how s/he expresses his/her problem, and personal history. At the same time, life constraints due to diseases caused by old age can also cause depression. For this reason, it is important to identify these diseases. At the initial assessment, the client's spiritual orientation and thoughts are understood. Similarly, Tan (2007) notes that, in the practice of spiritually oriented CBT, information about the spiritual beliefs and practices of clients should be obtained within the first two sessions. In the second interview, the deeper spiritual views of the client are better assessed. For this, the therapist examines the client's spiritual past and attempts to determine the role, if any, that his past spiritual beliefs play in his/her current life. Thus it is possible to determine which applications to use in order to get started and add meaning to the client's life.

Even if an elderly client is not aware of going through a therapeutic process, it is very important for the therapist to give the client information about the goals and process of CBT. In this explanation, a simple and understandable language is used. The therapist makes further explanations about homework assignments and goals, but is mindful of making it a dialogue rather than a lecture. Initially, the therapist can discuss the content of the spiritual dimension with the client. For example, the therapist can ask the client whether he or she would benefit from meditation or prayer at the beginning or end of the counseling session. In addition, the therapist, as one of the figures at the center of CBT, trains counselors on spiritual cooperation. In cognitive restructuring, firstly, elderly clients are trained about myths about old age. Hope is encouraged as the most important approach to cognitive restructuring. If there are cognitive distortions in their beliefs, these are also worked on.

### **Ethical Responsibility in Spiritually Oriented CBT Practice**

Spiritually orientated CBT therapists support their clients in using their own religious doctrines and behaviors to transform the thinking, values, and behaviors that disrupt their harmony into a more meaningful, hopeful, optimistic worldview. In all respects, therapists must respect the spiritual realm of the client (D'Souza & Rodrigo, 2004; Koenig, 2012). Post and Wade (2009) examined daily practices and literature and identified the difficulties and important points that could arise in spiritually oriented therapies. These points were:

- i. When psychotherapists are compared to the clients they serve, they tend to emphasize religion less and spirituality more. For this reason, it is very important for therapists who practice spiritually oriented counseling to receive supervision, not only to recognize the client's potential for spirituality but also to ensure that they feel comfortable working

- clinically about these issues (Polonski, 2003). In supervision exercises, the effect of the counselor's family background on his/her spiritual orientation can be investigated with the genogram technique. For therapists, becoming aware of their own thoughts and prejudices regarding spirituality is an important goal (Bartoli, 2007).
- ii. Therapists generally state that they have never received any education or have very little knowledge in spiritual matters. This causes therapists not to trust themselves in spiritual counseling.
  - iii. Many spiritual or religious clients may want to talk about spiritual issues in therapy. In this regard, the therapist can routinely assess the treatment preferences of his clients with respect.
  - iv. Some clients want their therapists to use spiritual interventions in therapy. For many spiritually oriented clients, both religious and non-religious therapists can effectively apply these techniques.
  - v. Spiritual issues can sometimes be associated with problems in therapy. For this reason, the therapist can regularly evaluate the client's spiritual history and concerns.
  - vi. Spiritual clients often find it very helpful to talk about spiritual issues. Talking over these issues may save time when the client starts to build a therapeutic relationship with the therapist, for example during the first session, and the acceptance of the client's spiritual worldview by the therapist may also improve trust.
  - vii. Experimental evidence indicates that spiritual interventions are often effective. (Azhar et al., 1994; Azhar & Varma, 1995; Razali et al., 2002). For this reason, it is good for therapists to consider using spiritual techniques when appropriate.

A CBT therapist must have a good education and sufficient experience in this field. In spiritually oriented CBT practice, the therapist may need to explain the cognitive distortions that the client has, taking into account his/her religious and spiritual considerations. In this case, the therapist's own religious and spiritual views can influence the spiritually oriented CBT process (Tan & Johnson, 2007). While therapists have knowledge of their own spiritual beliefs, they may not have knowledge of the spiritual belief systems of clients with different beliefs. If the therapist is not careful, this may cause him/her to behave in a biased manner (Plante, 2007). There are two situations that a CBT therapist should attend to ethically, especially when working with a religious client (Tan & Johnson, 2007). Therapists should not marginalize or reject the client's religious beliefs no matter how unconventional or controversial they seem, and they should not try to dispute or disprove the principal religious ideas of the client, whether implicitly or explicitly.

Another more specific requirement is that the therapist has sufficient knowledge on and experience with the religious view that the client is involved in. It will thus be possible to discuss with the client the particular considerations that are not in accordance with the mainstream views of the religion that the client is involved in and that are not functional. Sometimes the client and the therapist can work together to correct beliefs that are not in line with the true nature of the religious texts (Tan & Johnson, 2007).





According to [Elkonin, Brown, and Naicker's study \(2012\)](#), it is not easy for therapists to vocalize the concepts of religion and spirituality, and a considerable deal of literature needs to be read on the subject in order to achieve confidence in discussing them. In addition, it is difficult for therapists to reach a consensus on certain topics regarding religion and spirituality. In the same study, it was also found that some of the participants had a more negative evaluation of spirituality while others had more positive meanings associated with spirituality. A large number of therapists have indicated that spirituality can be used therapeutically in the direction of the client's needs and guidance. In the qualitative study conducted by [Ekşi, Takmaz, and Kardaş \(2016\)](#) in Turkey, psychological counselors gave importance to spirituality in the counseling process, and stated reasons for the inclusion of spirituality in the therapeutic process. Developing standards for application and supervision is important for spiritually oriented psychotherapy in general, as well as spiritually oriented CBT specifically.

### **Conclusion**

It is not possible for spirituality, which occupies an important place in the lives of many individuals and determines their social relations, to be excluded from the framework of a science that carries the purpose of understanding human beings such as psychology and the practice of psychotherapy. The literature reveals that it is necessary for therapists who practice spiritually oriented CBT to have good knowledge, experience, and skills in the field of CBT, as well as a strong knowledge of the religious beliefs of the clients whom they serve. Otherwise, many ethical problems may arise in practice. In this sense, the therapist should have acquired relevant training and experience and the process should be followed up with supervision to support the practice of spiritually oriented CBT.

The guidance of spirituality, which has historically played an important role in human existence, should also be considered in therapy sessions, along with other multiple thought systems that affect the surrounding social structures. Human beings and human behavior were conceptualized as non-interactive parts for many years, mostly due to an excessive trust in science and a reductionist attitude in the treatment offered to clients. This attitude contributes to the failure to take a holistic view of life and to understand our spiritual formation ([Sue & Sue, 2008](#)). Yet, in many areas of science, and in particular with paradigm shifts in psychology, there has been a change in our understanding of the nature of reality. Scientists and practitioners are beginning to work on phenomena related to unobservable aspects of the human creature such as spirituality. Subjective evaluations by researchers are not undesirable; rather, they play a role in influencing the process of acquiring information. With this transformation, there has been an increase in research on spirituality in psychology,

and the results of these studies are also reflected in therapy applications. It should be noted that there have always been efforts to address this important area of human experience in psychology dating back to the early prominent psychologists such as William James; yet, recent paradigm shifts have accelerated the acceptance of spirituality as a relevant area of study and psychological resource.

In several studies, the therapeutic acceleration effect of spiritually oriented CBT with religious counselors has been documented. At the same time, however, these practices have created some new problems and areas of need. For example, [Rosmarin et al. \(2011\)](#) state that spiritual thoughts shape how people perceive themselves, the world and the future, and that spiritual integration of cognitive models is important, but they add that it may create uncertainty when applied without forming a theoretical model that avoids oversimplification and that has been authenticated through testing its suitability with spirituality.

Spiritually oriented psychotherapy is already used in clinical practice, but it is still at the beginning of its history and there are many issues to be investigated ([Wolf & Stevens, 2001](#)). While a considerable accumulation has begun to emerge in the worldwide literature in this area, it can be said that the practice of spiritually oriented therapy for Turkey is “in the midst of a stir yet.” Most of the available Turkish studies on spirituality are correlational or scale adaptation/development studies ([Ayten & Anık, 2014](#); [Ayten, Anık, & Eryücel, 2013](#); [Ayten, Göçen, Sevinç, & Öztürk, 2012](#); [Ayten & Sağır, 2014](#); [Coşkunsever, 2016](#); [Göçen, 2013](#); [Karakuş & Koç, 2014](#); [Kula, 2002](#); [Şentepe, 2013](#)), whereas therapeutic and group counseling examples of spiritually oriented CBT applications are very few ([Kamakcan & Şirin, 2013](#)). It is clear that the studies being conducted are screening studies on the use of religious coping methods in general.

In this sense, the development of suitable therapeutic applications of spiritually oriented CBT for Turkey and countries with similar religious and cultural characteristics, as well as experimental trials on these applications, is important. Spiritually oriented CBT can be implemented with many spiritual and religious clients in these countries and positive results can be obtained in these applications. However, the existence of different sects must be considered when these studies are conducted. Therapists need to have in-depth knowledge of belief systems and religious practices of different religious denominations. In these countries, there remains a great need for psychological units that provide such training. In addition, compliance with ethical rules is not audited in practice. The lack of adequate training for spiritually oriented therapies and the lack of control with respect to ethical practices create the risk of impairing functioning by exposing the use of spirituality in these countries.

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Research Article

# Embodiment of the Spirit: A Case Study

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## Abstract

Adopting a longitudinal approach to exploring the psychology of the transition from military to civilian life, one case study is presented that adds a spiritual perspective to the transition process. This case study serves as an example representative from a group of participants who have been followed through a research project on identity reconstruction during the transition to civilian life. This individual, not unlike many others within the group, undergoes an unexpected progression of the military I-position of the self throughout the process of becoming a civilian. This study utilizes a dialogical approach to the identity work to further the understanding of longitudinal adjustments to the self. An analysis of the narrative developments and interactions among pre-existing and new I-positions of the self over time has been made based upon three annually conducted interviews spanning from 2014 to 2016. The results lead to the suggestion that if a military I-position of the self grows more salient and voiced throughout the process of transitioning into civilian life, then this vocalization may be related to the spirit of a person embodied in a specific I-position of the self. Such growth of a military I-position after leaving active service may gravitate around a deep sense of “who I am” with a profound sense of meaning attached to this position. Instead of perceiving as an unwanted development the growth of a military sense of “who I am,” one should acknowledge it as a deeper dimension of self and life. It is important to find an outlet for such a progression of the self so as to sustain balance and dialogue. Future research is encouraged to further examine these qualitative findings.

## Keywords

Military to civilian transition • Self • Spirit • I-position

## “Ruh”un Şekillenmesi: Bir Durum Çalışması

### Öz

Bu makalede, askeri hayattan sivil hayata geçiş sürecine manevi bir perspektif ekleyerek, boylamsal bir yaklaşımla bu olgunun psikolojik boyutunun incelenmesini amaçlayan bir durum çalışması sunulmaktadır. Bu çalışmada incelenen vaka, sivil hayata geçiş sürecinde kimlik inşası üzerine yürütülen bir araştırma projesinde izlenen bir gruba örneklik teşkil etmektedir. Bu birey, grup içindeki diğerlerine benzer bir şekilde askeri ben-konumunun (I-position) “sivil olma” sürecinde umulmadık şekilde seyreden bir dönüşümünü tecrübe etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, benlik üzerindeki boylamsal dönüşümleri daha iyi açıklamak için kimlik çalışması bakımından diyalojik bir yaklaşım kullanılmaktadır. Benliğin zaman içindeki, önceden var olan ve yeni ben-konumları arasındaki anlamlı gelişmeleri ve etkileşimleri üzerindeki analiz, 2014-2016 yıllarını arasında üç kez yapılan mülakatlarda elde edilen verilere dayanarak yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar, sivil yaşama geçiş süreci boyunca askeri bir ben-konumu belirginleştiğinde ve seslendirildiğinde, bu seslendirmelerin, benliğin belirli bir konumunda yer alan benliğin “ruh”uyla ilişkili olabileceği fikrini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Aktif hizmetten ayrıldıktan sonra askeri ben-konumundaki büyüme, “Ben kimim” sorusu ve bu konuma atfedilen derin anlam ekseninde açıklanabilir. Askeri ben-konumun büyümesini istenmedik bir gelişme olarak ele almak yerine bireyin bunu benlik ve yaşamın derin bir boyutu olarak ele alması yerinde olacaktır. Dengeyi ve diyalogu sürdürmek için bu tür bir sürecin dışı vurulabileceği mecralar bulmak da önem arz etmektedir. Gelecekteki araştırmalarda, bu nitel bulguların daha ayrıntılı olarak incelenmesi teşvik edilmektedir.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Askerlikten sivilliğe geçiş • Benlik • Ruh • Ben-konumu

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Little attention has been directed to exploring and describing military-service members' transitions into civilian culture with an exclusive focus on self-identity work. Brunger, Serrato, and Ogden (2013; p. 88) suggest that "the concept of identity in relation to the military is by no means a new one," but much of the focus thereof has been upon the investigation of military identities and the construction of gender "rather than how one's identity might shift in response to contextual alterations." The process of leaving military service and transferring one's self into a life in the civilian population necessitates some type of identity reconstruction, which may pose serious challenges to a service member's self (Beder, 2012; Bragin, 2010; Buell, 2010; Coll, Weiss, & Yarvis, 2012; Drops, 2004; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011; Savion, 2009; Yanos, 2004). Due to the possibility that warrior culture tends to internalize problems within individuals, military identities themselves may potentially accentuate the difficulties of identity reconstruction (Bryan & Morrow, 2011; Devries, Hughes, Watson, & Moore, 2012; Dickstein, Vogt, Handa, & Litz, 2010; French, 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Hall, 2012a, 2012b; Kim, Britt, Klocko, Riviere, & Adler, 2011; Moore, 2012; Wertsch, 1991). Additionally, Brunger et al. (2013, p. 95) suggest "that the transition from military to civilian life is representative of a shift in identity, whereby ex-service personnel must accept identity loss and the inevitable need for change therein." Such a process of identity reconstruction may touch upon the deepest sense of who one's self really is and its related meaning and purpose in life (Grimell, 2016a).

This introductory review of self-identity work in transitioning from military to civilian life indicates that more research would help better illuminate the process of becoming a civilian. However, much of this research implies a more linear understanding of the process as a steady one-way progression from a military identity to another identity constructed as a civilian. This perceived progression of self-identity work does not seem to leave much room for a more fluid or dialogical approach to the process of becoming a civilian. It may even seem to suggest that banishing the military position to the shadow lands in the periphery of the self is desirable and advantageous.

A dialogical perspective of the self in transitioning to civilian life is rare to find, as are spiritual perspectives that reflect upon self-identity work in the process of becoming a civilian. This article, which cooperatively consider a case study from an ongoing longitudinal and qualitative project investigating existential and religious aspects of identity reconstruction among Swedish service members in civilian transition, seeks to begin filling the gap by combining a dialogical approach with a spiritual interpretation. Within the sample of nineteen ( $N = 19$ ) service members transitioning to civilian life, an articulate group of participants have been experiencing an unexpected process in the self whereby the military I-positions have become more pronounced and noticeable over time. This case study has been chosen as the representative voice for this group.

By adopting the lens of a dialogical self (Hermans, 1996, 2001a, 2003), much of the tensions and conflicts in transitional stories and experiences can be understood as arising from the need to reorganize the I-positions of the self (Grimell, 2015b). Such processes of the self are in general described and understood from psychological, social, and cultural perspectives; thus, it feels complementary to gain a broader perspective by considering the spiritual dimensions of inquiry. In the process of transitioning to a civilian, a military I-position may initially be described as causing conflict within the self, perhaps even by growing overly dominant in some cases with negative implications from a dialogical outlook (Grimell, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b). In contrast, transitioning away from active service can easily be expected to lead to a distinct decline of the military I-position. From a more traditional psychological perspective, a military I-position that appears to grow more noticeable and pronounced in the self over time could indicate a service member's difficulty adjusting to a civilian life and population. However, based upon the current project, this is not necessarily the case. One could instead consider this unexpected process in the self from a spiritual perspective; one could suggest that this development is related to the spirit of a dialogical self, embodied by a particular I-position. Such a discussion may even lead to suggesting criteria that can be used to identify the spirit.

This article will utilize a narrative and dialogical approach in the longitudinal analysis of self in civilian transition, finalized through a spiritual interpretation. The following sub-questions will inform the analysis.

- How do pre-existing and new I-positions interact and evolve throughout a transition?
- How is the spirit of the self embodied in the process?

This will continue with a conceptualization of dialogical self and its related concepts, followed by the method, findings derived from the longitudinal case study, discussion, and conclusion.

## Conceptualization

### A dialogical self with I-positions

The idea of a dialogical self is inspired by and rooted within the tradition of the self as proposed by James (1890), Bakhtin (1973), Mead (1934), and Sarbin (1986), who described a poly-vocal type of self due to the many characters that populate a self, which is highly influenced by culture. Mancuso and Sarbin (1983) and Sarbin (1986) suggested that the author of these narrative characters in the story of who I am is the "I" of the self. Formulated another way, "I" constructs the character "Me," which the self then presents in the personal story of who I am (Sarbin, 1986, p. 18). Hermans,



Kampen, and Van Loon (1992) proposed a dialogical translation of the narrative I-Me distinction that Sarbin (1986) made, which could be viewed as the starting point for the concept of a dialogical self. A dialogical self (Hermans, 1996, 2001a, 2003) combines and goes beyond the traditional, modern, and post-modern views of the self (see Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, for a full review). A dialogical self is understood as an extension of its society; the self is understood as a “society of mind” with its potential for dialogue, tension, and conflict (Hermans, 2002, p. 147). A dialogical self consists of many I-positions with specific voices (e.g., I as a husband, I as a son, I as a football player, I as a musician). These I-positions can be linked to either the internal or the external domain of self (Hermans, 2008, 2013). I-positions in the internal domain of self are located inside of a person (e.g., I as ambitious, I as happy). I-positions in the external domain of self are located outside the person (e.g., my family, my colleagues) but are really part of the self. Given the basic assumption of the extended self, the other is not outside the self but rather an intrinsic part of the self (Day & Jesus, 2013; Hermans, 1996, 2001a). The compilation of these I-positions creates the position repertoire of the multiplicity of self (Hermans, 2001b). Unity is still a central concept, and by attributing I, me, or mine to positions, they become parts of the self (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

The dialogical self aims to support integrating decentralizing and centralizing self-movements (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Such a movement of the self could be understood as a dynamic process of positioning and counter-positioning between the I-positions that differ from person to person. The process may be flexible or controlled by a dominant I-position. Monologues can become the hallmark of self. I-positions of the self can cooperate and collaborate due to shared desires and interests. The self may need to innovate as new life situations are encountered. “In the case of a transition, the self is confronted with a new, unfamiliar or even threatening situation that requires an adaption or reorganization of the self” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 239). Transitioning implies a transfer from one particular context with a related identity to another context with its own related identity. In that movement a new character(s) in the story of who I am will be added alongside the already existing ones in the position repertoire of self (Hermans, 2001b). Such a process calls for some type of reorganization of self. A transition formally starts when the service member leaves active service; however, the transition may have been processed by the self, and others for that matter, long preceding such an exit point. The transition has no concise stop point in time. Yet I suggest that transitions where the self can engage in dialogue in such a way so that the old and new characters (i.e. identities) are allowed to make their voices heard and attuned to the sense of who I am are complete.

The concept of narrative identity consists of two components (Slocum-Bradley, 2009): the character as such (e.g., I as a service man, I as a boyfriend) and the

specific features of these characters (e.g., focused, efficient, loyal, talented). These self-characters populate a personal narrative, which serves as an identity claim and a self-representation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Mancuso, 1986; McAdams, 1997, 1988; Mishler, 1986, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986).

## Method

### Research Design

This longitudinal case study has been collected from an ongoing longitudinal project on the transition to civilian life. The working title of the project, which reflects the overall research purpose, is *Existential and Religious Dimensions in Identity Reconstruction among Swedish Military Personnel during the Process of Becoming Civilians*. The empirical phase, including annual interviews, started during the summer of 2013 and was completed in the summer of 2016. The project sample included nineteen ( $N = 19$ ) Swedish military service members in the process of transitioning to civilian life (for a further description of the project, design, and sample, see Grimell, 2016a). The approach to the inquiry is narrative, a productive and qualitative lens to use when narrowing in on empirical issues of identity in lived life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McAdams, 2013; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2002, 2006). The process of narrative analysis is an inductive inquiry, and the methodological principle is built around the interview, as detailed in the next section.

### Interview Methodology

The interviews are based on a semi-structured design to cover topics relevant to the research purpose (Kvale, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; van den Brand, Hermans, Scherer, & Verschuren, 2014). The same interview guide has been used throughout the interviews. The questions are open and designed to allow the interviewee to construct answers in the ways he finds meaningful (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Crossley, 2000; Riessman, 1993; Scherer-Rath, 2014; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The topics covered were: military story, transition, relationships, identity, and existential concerns. Some of these topics could be seen as implicit spiritual questions with a reference to Pargament's (2011) questions for implicit spiritual assessment. Each interview has been transcribed into a complete transcript. Complete transcripts in Swedish and a summarization in English will be provided to other researchers upon request.

### Interviewer

In addition to the fact that I conducted the interviews as a researcher in practical theology with a stated research purpose, the participants were informed in the consent letter that I am a former military officer. In the eyes of the participants, I am a person



who has served, and we share a common military background that establishes a sense of basic trust throughout the interviews (Mishler, 1986, 2004).

### **Interviewee and Material**

Sergeant First Class Oskar was chosen for this article because his case is representative of and gives voice to a number of participants in the project related to military self-identity in civilian transition. Oskar's case neither too strongly nor too weakly illuminates these experiences in civilian transition. His case is rather medial in comparison to the full body of the participants' experiences regarding transition. Through this analysis is the opportunity to present both a unique, but also representative, case study which shows finer details in the longitudinal process. This case study analysis elaborates the first (T1, February 2014), second (T2, February 2015), and third interviews (T3, February 2016) made with Oskar.

Each interviewee volunteered through a snow-ball sampling method (Noy, 2008; Polkinghorne, 2005). Oskar was approached by another participant using a letter of information about the study, which had been distributed using email. Each participant had to fill in and return a response letter and, among other things, suggest a time and place for each interview. This also served as the informed consent agreement. The participants joined the study without any confessional requirements. The interviews lasted about one hour. The interviews were conducted on location chosen by the interviewee, whose anonymity has been protected by using the fictitious name of Oskar in this case.

### **Analytical Methodology**

A portrait of how the pre-existing and new I-positions that populate Oskar's self interact and evolve throughout the transition will be presented in the case study description in the subsequent section. This portrait also includes a background in regards to Oskar's decision to leave active service. Based upon the given theory of a dialogical self with I-positions, including the definition of narrative identity as shared earlier in this article, this section serves to describe how the pre-existing and new I-positions were derived from the interview narratives even as they interacted and evolved throughout the process of becoming a civilian.

The first phase of analysis included a reading and re-readings of the transcripts. Through this process a number of voices or characters of the interview narratives could be discerned who "function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement" (Hermans, 1999, p. 72). The condition of Oskar's self in transition over time were assumed code-able through the levels of narrated tension, cooperation, harmony, and dialogue among

the voiced characters of, for example, an officer, boyfriend, student, and security consultant during the interview narratives (Hermans, 1996, 2001a, 2001b; Hermans & Hermans-Jensen, 1995).

In order to organize the initial findings systematically, the subsequent step was to code the transcripts in a qualitative data analysis program called Atlas.ti. The content in the interviews was organized through the hermeneutical unit in Atlas.ti by coding the different characters into narrative identities (e.g., officer, student, boyfriend, friend, security consultant) including specific features of the characters (e.g., disciplined, focused, organized). Levels of narrated tension, cooperation, harmony, and dialogue were attached to coded narrative identities, as were experiences or emotional states of meaning, purpose, and sadness, to name a few. Based upon the coded narrative identities, a corresponding set of I-positions was developed (Grimell, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b). The described process of analysis and coding in Atlas.ti made it possible to compare the development and interaction among pre-existing and new I-positions of the self over time.

In order to validate the narrative identity codes with the corresponding set of I-positions, the researcher considered the three interviews as a type of triangulation that included content and process over a longer period of time and space (Polkinghorne, 2005). No ambiguous I-positions were coded; the extracted I-positions were induced from clear narrative descriptions of characters made by the participant Oskar (Raggatt, 2013; Stemplewska-Żakowicz, Zalewski, Suszek, & Kobylińska, 2013). As for the validity and reliability of a narrative inquiry such as this, the article agrees with the position of Ganzevoort (1998), who in reference to Mishler (1991), suggests that narrative research may score higher on validity (i.e., measuring what it intends to measure), depending of course upon the quality of data collection, than on reliability in terms of replication, which may be more difficult to capture within a narrative study.

A list of I-positions extracted from the interviews are:

- I as an officer
- I as a student
- I as a boyfriend
- I as a friend
- I as a security consultant

Minor details of the narrated accounts have been slightly altered in the article to protect Oskar's anonymity, and his name is fictitious. Words or expressions within quotations or italics are taken verbatim.



## The Case Study Portrait

### Background

Oskar is a Sergeant First Class in his mid-twenties with a background in the Swedish Army. His service, totaling nearly five years as a specialist officer within the intelligence field, has included deployment in Afghanistan. Initially, Oskar perceived that his professional development had been rapid, but he experienced his progression gradually lose potential and ultimately leave no promising prospects due to a rigid military system. This development frustrated him. Oskar wanted to accomplish more in life. This drive to do more was the primary reason he left active service, which amid such frustration was a difficult and slowly processed decision rooted in deliberation that long preceded any actual action.

### Six months post-exit: Transition as a positive experience

When I met him for the first interview (T1, February 2014), Oskar had been six months post-exit. He had been attending university studies. According to Oskar, leaving active service was the right decision to make, and the transition experience had been positive thus far. He had contact with his unit and could serve whenever he wished as a reserve officer. Oskar emphasized a specific feeling when serving, particularly on missions, that is difficult to find elsewhere:

*It is a difficult feeling to describe. The only ones who can describe it are probably those who have served. It is a feeling of being part of something, to contribute to something that is bigger than one's self; I support and contribute to something that I cannot do by myself.*

When Oskar was encouraged to describe himself as an officer he replied:

*Disciplined, motivated and driven by will, organized is first and foremost something that constitutes me as a person, no matter if I am at work or elsewhere, I am proud to have such a capacity, that I am organized and structured.*

As the transition began Oskar started studying at a university to pursue a degree in security management. His character as a student bears many features of his military character. He is an organized and efficient student.

Oskar is living with his girlfriend and has many civilian as well as military friends. Oskar perceives his self as flexible and dynamic. Depending on the people he interacts with, he alters the subject matter for discussions and positions of his self (e.g., girlfriend, family, civilian, military friends). Oskar claims that it is vital to be able to shift from “me” being a service member to “me” being a civilian person and vice versa.

### **Twenty months post-exit: A strengthened sense of being an officer**

During the second interview (T2, February 2015), about twenty months post-exit, Oskar has graduated and is employed as a security consultant in a civilian company. The security consultant is a new character in Oskar's personal story. There is an obvious change from the decidedly positive tone that permeated the first interview. Oskar has begun to miss many aspects of service (e.g., meaning, camaraderie, excitement, benefits). An emotion of sadness and doubt is present, and Oskar considers reenlisting in active duty. It appears that Oskar has served for a month between the first and second interviews. The sense of being a part of something bigger than one's self when serving is an articulated theme. A new evolving self-theme in the second interview is a claim regarding his identity as an officer:

*I haven't felt so much as an officer as I do now when I have left... when I identify myself such as when I think of what I do, what I am, I identify myself as, yes, I am still an officer; of course I am. That is something fundamental to the person I am, and for that reason I am very eager to not lose it.*

The character of a boyfriend has also advanced in his self, as Oskar talks about starting a family. That is another reason for reenlisting according to Oskar, because that would generate more vacation time compared with working as a security consultant.

Oskar is still struggling with a deeper existential question of what to do with his life. He would like to contribute and make the world safer, but his career as a security consultant does not seem to carry the same significance and impact. The security character appears less integrated in Oskar's self as he struggles with finding a balance between work and deeper meaning and purpose in life.

### **Thirty-two months post-exit: Protecting the officer's self**

As we met for the third and final interview (T3, February 2016), about thirty-two months post-exit, Oskar continued to work as a security consultant. Amid his work as a security consultant, Oskar is eager to present himself in different civilian work settings as an officer who has served and still serves. It is important for Oskar to maintain and protect the military part of who he is in more contexts than just the military one. Oskar replied:

*Yes, it is important, it really is. I don't know why, but when I ceased serving actively, I began to feel more proud of being an officer. Before, I hadn't said that, but when I stopped serving I almost wanted to scream it out loud. It means a lot. I often see myself as an officer... and because of that it is important to keep serving as a reserve officer, to maintain that identity. I have an outlet for my personal characteristics such as being structured. If I am going to ransack myself than I'll of course say I am an old service member. It lies inside me.*





For Oskar, military service is still attached to contributing some greater good for society, something larger than one's self, something that goes beyond money and monetary profit. Even though being a security consultant also appears important, Oskar claims that *somehow it feels that serving in the armed forces was more meaningful*.

Although Oskar misses the camaraderie, service, meaning, purpose, and identity, he nonetheless supports the idea of staying on a civilian career path in combination with satisfying the otherwise unsatisfied needs through part-time service as a reserve officer. Yet he aspires to bridge the span between these two worlds by finding a more meaningful civilian career that gives him the satisfaction of contributing to the greater good for society and transcends the self, money, and profit.

### Discussion

As a short dialogically-tailored recap, Oscar was quite positive at the onset of his transition process. He entered the university context, and a new I-position as a student was added to his self. The climate of dialogue in his self was instilled with cooperation. The disciplined, focused, and efficient officer was collaborating with the student position. In the second interview, yet another transition into professional civilian work-life had been entered, and this provided him with a new contextual I-position as a security consultant. Throughout this lengthy process the position as an officer became strengthened and more voiced in his self. There appeared to be more tension in his self. Oskar even considered reenlisting again. His I-position as a boyfriend was inclined to cooperate with such a military I-position, as it would generate more time for family. Thus the process was more nuanced and included a new tone. The third and final interview suggests that the transition was complete, as Oskar no longer seriously considered returning to active full-time enlistment; he had decided to stay on the civilian course. Yet a significant, possibly crucial, detail had enabled this decision by preserving his I-position as an officer, which he felt resided within a deeper level of his self: Oskar's frequent part-time service. Part-time service included some higher meaning in life for Oskar.

From the beginning to the end of the transition, through university to civilian employment, Oskar's dialogical capacity has survived intact, and the self has engaged in cooperation and seriously identified solutions for sustaining a good climate of dialogue within the self throughout the reorganization of I-positions (Hermans, 2001a, 2003, 2004, 2008). Oskar's transition and adjustment of I-positions makes a good case of integration and dialogical interactions amidst the challenges of transition. Every detail may not have evolved precisely as he would have liked; still, Oskar has found dialogical routes to persevere. He has widened his self and learned more about

his self in new contextual situations that were not accessible as an actively serving officer (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

There are some interesting questions which may be addressed from a psychological perspective. Why has Oskar's I-position as an officer become strengthened and more voiced in his self throughout the years of transition? Why has it continued to evolve? Why is this I-position so vital for him to preserve? From a dialogical point of view there is a large amount of internal and external power or energy in the I-position of an officer (Hermans, 1996, 1997, 1999). Internal energy refers to features related to the internal domain of his self (e.g., structured, disciplined, focused, efficient, motivated), while external energy refers to aspects of service related to the domain outside of Oskar (e.g., being a part of something larger than one's self, contributing to the greater good and society, purpose, meaning, camaraderie). It seems reasonable that Oskar wants to maintain an I-position with such internal and external magnitude. The officer is a salient part of his self that lacks negative implications and tends to override other positions. The dialogical condition of his self throughout transition supports such an interpretation, as he is fully capable of engaging in good dialogue even with a "core position" of officer (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 240). Yet this seems to fall short of answering why the I-position has evolved, grown stronger, and intensified in his self throughout his transition and reorganization of self.

Now I shift focus then from a dialogical to a spiritual lens and begin the interpretation by stating that from a spiritual outlook, one assumes that humans are not exclusively psychological, social, and physical beings, but spiritual beings, as well (Ellens, 2008, 2011; Rumbold, 2013). Life viewed through a spiritual lens can discern deeper meanings in experiences. Through a spiritual lens, one can find timeless values that offer self-understanding and give direction in life (Pargament, 1997, 1999, 2011). From such a position I assume that Oskar's self has a spirit that could be defined as "the essential core of the individual, the deepest part of the self, and one's evolving human essence" (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011, p. 58). His spirit would then consist of a vital and deeper force of who he is, which is constantly evolving. His spirit would be directed toward told and untold dreams, goals, and aspirations (e.g., contributing to society beyond individuality, being part of something larger than one's self) anchored in the self, which propels Oskar forward (Sweeney, Hannah, & Snider, 2007). The idea that Oskar has a spirit is related to a variety of higher order qualities such as purpose, meaning, authenticity, interconnectedness, and self-actualization (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011). Some researchers have also ascribed a number of sacred qualities to the spirit, including ultimacy, boundlessness, and transcendence (Otto, 1928; Pargament, 2011; Pargament & Sweeney, 2011; Pargament, Lomax, Shealy-McGee, & Fang, 2014; Tillich, 1952).



The spirit of Oskar is linked to spirituality, which in turn refers to the continuous journey he takes to discern and realize his spirit and essential self (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011; Sweeney et al., 2007; Teasdale, 1999). In other words, spirituality is an extraordinary quest that aspires to unfold what is most essential to the self. In general people can engage a variety of pathways in the service of developing the human spirit (Heelas, 2008; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Mahoney, 2013). “Nature, music, exercise, loving relationships, scientific exploration, religion, work, art, philosophy, and study are just a few of the paths people follow in their efforts to grow spiritually” (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011, p. 39). Oskar’s journey to realize his spirit and essential self has been fulfilled militarily at the moment. What is suggested then is that the spirit of Oskar’s self is embodied in his I-position as an officer. Within this I-position lies the inner (internal) and outer (external) qualities of Oskar’s spirit. Through a spiritual lens, the change of tone (e.g., loss, sadness, tension) in the second interview indicates a broader awareness of the loss of the old pathway (i.e. active service) for the spirit to sustain itself, and it is this unmet spiritual need that stimulated thoughts of re-enrolling (Pargament, 2008, 2011). Amid the rising awareness of this loss of the old pathway for spiritual fulfillment, Oskar felt an intensified need in the third interview to protect his identity as an officer through part-time service. The different transitional phases continued to further disturb the connection to the pathway for the spirit to sustain itself, thereby causing a need to protect it. Oskar has dealt and coped with the rising awareness by holding on to the associated military aspects of his spirit using a conversational approach through part-time service (Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar, & Ano, 2005).

There are limitations in this article that need to be addressed. This is a case study in which Sergeant First Class Oskar was selected because his case is representative of and gives voice to a trend in the sample of the project related to military self-identity in the civilian transition whereupon the military I-positions refuse to decline and instead became more voiced and salient over time. The case neither too strongly nor too weakly illuminates these experiences in civilian transition, but is instead rather typical of them. This case is an attempt to present unique, albeit representative, details in the process. The quantitative amplitude is small, but within the sample of 19 participants, several service members had experienced a growing awareness of having a service member in the spirit of who they are while transitioning to civilian life. This hopefully serves as an invitation to continue this qualitative inquiry in different contexts among other service members in the transition to civilian life that concentrates on this type of self-identity development. This is an invitation for other researchers to expand its quantitative amplitude. It would be interesting to employ an even longer longitudinal time-frame that includes more interviews with each participant than this project. A time-frame of five to seven years in regards to a smaller sample seems as though it could yield additional robust knowledge about

such self-identity processes as described in this article. Another limitation is that only five clear I-positions had been detected in the interview-narratives; however, many more likely populate Oskar's self. Yet all five of these that were discussed are explicit narrative positions. Some may perceive that the spiritual interpretation of the explicit military I-position is too implicit and too weak, but the suggestion may provide more insight as to why Oskar's I-position keeps evolving over time, why it needs to be protected, and why it is so important for him to preserve it. The spiritual essence of who Oskar is resonates in his military self.

### **Conclusion**

Spiritual psychology provides counselors and caregivers with yet another dimension in which to guide and treat care receivers (Pargament, 2011). In the case of the psychology of military-to-civilian transition with regard to self-identity work, the spiritual approach is both underemployed and promising (Grimell, 2016a). The termination of active service equates to terminating the self's military voice, or at least signals its decline to a large degree. Research on identity processes often suggests that former military service members must accept identity loss and the inevitable need for change therein. For Oskar, like others, the evolving military voice of the self may be regarded from an external or outer perspective as a problem that needs to be solved, subdued, or perhaps reorganized into a more shadowed position of the self in favor of the empirically obvious identity as a security consultant. Particularly in a civilian society of peace, such a military voice and military features in general (e.g., disciplined, structured, efficient, organized) may be loaded with negative connotations. However, for Oskar and others in this project, the evolving military voice represents who he is on a deeper level of the self; it fulfills a need for deeper meaning and purpose that has, at least so far, been otherwise unmet within the civilian realm. This may also serve as one criterion for recognizing the spirit from a narrative point of view: an evolving voice that continues to articulate itself in the interest of sustaining itself in spite of the hardships and challenges posed by time, new contexts, and I-positions of the self. From a spiritually guided psychological lens, one may view a military voice such as Oskar's as his spirit embodied in an I-position of an officer. Even considering the fact that Oskar is now primarily a civilian in regards to the temporal dimension, the intensified military voice is not problematic but rather a positive entity that endows his life with deeper dimensions. To acknowledge the military voice is a part of the growth and development of his spirit. The challenge is to find an outlet for the spirit, which in Oskar's case has been resolved through part-time service as a reserve officer. Unfortunately among other participants in this project, and of course society at large, the route to the old military pathways may on the other hand have been more difficult or even utterly inaccessible due to varied reasons, which can result in sadness, anxiety, and frustration (Grimell, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b).



I need to state, however, that this interpretation of the spirit embodied in a self's specific I-position rests upon a more secular existential understanding of spirituality related to self, meaning, and purpose in life, without necessarily reducing it to purely psychological or social processes (Bryan, Graham, & Roberge, 2015; Currier, Kuhlman, & Smith, 2015; Heelas, 2008; Kopacz & Connery, 2015; Rumbold, 2013).

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Research Article

# Spiritual Well-Being: Scale Development and Validation \*

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## Abstract

The spiritual well-being scale was developed as a way of assessing how well adults' lives align with their values and their understanding of ultimate meaning in personal, social, environmental, and transcendental terms. The items on the scale were selected based on existing literature and essays addressing spirituality. The scale was then shown to 17 specialists in spirituality and edited in response to their comments to produce the last version of each item. The scale, composed of 49 items, was then administered to 865 adults (498 women, 57.6%; 367 men, 42.4%). Based on the results, the item set was then resolved to a 29-item scale, and Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed three significant dimensions of spirituality, which are transcendence, harmony with nature, and anomie. Construct validity and reliability were empirically ascertained and the goodness of fit was determined for the proposed model of spiritual well-being. (KMO: 951, when eigenvalue is 2; total item explanation variance: 58.337 %). The ensemble of the model's coefficients are  $\chi^2/sd = 4.11$ , RMESEA = .06, SRMR = .50, NFI = .90, CFI = .92. The results show that the Spiritual Well-Being Scale has the ability to measure adults' spiritual well-being in a valid and reliable manner.

## Keywords

Spirituality • Spiritual well-being • Scale • Scale development • Reliability • Validity

## Spiritüel İyi Oluş: Ölçek Geliştirme ve Geçerliği

### Öz

İnsanın değer ve nihai anlamları doğrultusunda kişisel, toplumsal, çevresel ve trasandantal (aşkın) yönleriyle hayatlarını anlama ve yaşama sürecini belirlemek amacıyla yetişkinlere yönelik geliştirilmiş bir ölçektir. Ölçeğin maddeleri ilgili literatür ile diğer ölçeklerden yararlanılarak ve konuyla ilgili olan kişilere yazdırılmış kompozisyonlardan elde edilmiştir. Konuyla ilgili çalışmaları olan 17 uzmanın görüşleri alınmış bunlar dikkate alınarak maddelere son hali verilmiştir. Son aşamada toplam 49 maddeden oluşan çalışma 865 yetişkine (498 kadın, %57,6; 367 erkek, %42,4) uygulanmıştır. Yapılan doğrulayıcı faktör analizi sonucunda 29 maddelik; aşkınlık, doğayla uyum ve anomie adlı 3 faktörlü bir yapı ortaya çıkmıştır. Yapılan analizle birlikte ölçeğin yapı geçerliği ve güvenilirliği bilimsel olarak ortaya çıkarılmış ve amaçlanan spiritüel iyi oluş modeline uygun bir yapı ortaya çıkmıştır. (KMO: 951, Eigen değeri 2 olarak alındığında toplam madde açıklama varyansı % 58,337). Modelin uyum indeksleri ( $\chi^2/sd = 4.11$ , RMESEA = .06, SRMR = .50, NFI = .90, CFI = .92) şeklindedir. Spiritüel İyi Oluş Ölçeği'nin geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışmaları, ölçeğin yetişkinlerin spiritüel iyi olma hallerini geçerli ve güvenilir olarak ölçme yeteneğine sahip olduğunu göstermektedir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Spiritüellik • Spiritüel iyi oluş • Ölçek • Ölçek geliştirme • Geçerlik • Güvenirlilik

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Morrison-Orton (2004) stated that, historically, there is no distinction between religion and spirituality, and that, as a result, the growth of western secularism and disillusionment with religiosity has led to the perception that science is the only source of information for the psychological, social and physical diseases of society. Hill and Pargament (2003) argued that developments in the fields of religiosity and spirituality have demonstrated that these two concepts have a functional relation with physical and mental health. Scheck-Varner (2009) asserted that spirituality, in the widest sense, comprises numerous structures such as religiosity, participation in religious communities, religious and spiritual practices, religious coping, and spiritual well-being.

Spirituality and religiosity occupy an important place in human life as motivating and harmonizing forces. Religion and spirituality are not concepts that enter one's life only under certain conditions or at certain times; rather, they are ways of life that challenge us to consistently seek, experience, strengthen, and preserve (Hill & Pargament, 2003). Patneade (2006) noted that spirituality is a multidimensional structure and has been utilized in various contexts such as spirituality, spiritual goodness and spiritual well-being. She summarizes the definitions of spirituality by stating that there is a widespread conviction that spirituality is a universal experience, that it consists of meaning, purpose, values and beliefs, that it has a relational nature in which oneself, others and a higher being are involved, and that it contains a transcendental element. According to the results of a study conducted by Zinnbauer et al. (1997), spirituality and religiosity are concepts with different definitions. While religiosity is associated with higher-level authoritarianism, religious orthodoxy, inner religiosity, religious participation of one's parents, self-righteousness, and church participation, spirituality is associated with mystic experiences, New Age beliefs and practices, higher income and the experience of frustration with traditional religious structures.

The status of spiritual health as an important part of general health was acknowledged officially by the World Health Organization in 1998 (Robert, 2003). Paloutzian and Ellison (1982) had already developed a scale to measure spiritual well-being that included two subscales: religious and existential well-being. Unruh (1997) observed that spirituality is defined in the health literature in one of seven ways: (1) a relationship to God, spiritual well-being or a higher power, and a belief in a reality greater than the self; (2) an understanding or sensation that spirituality comes not from within the self but from outside of the self; (3) a state of transcendence or connectedness that is indispensably related to belief in a higher being or power; (4) an existential qualification of life that is not from the material world; (5) a sense of meaning and purpose in life; (6) life power or integrating power of the person; and (7) the sum of the above.

According to [Chandler, Holden, and Kolander \(1992\)](#), spirituality is related to the innate capacity or tendency to seek and move beyond the individual's current location of centeredness, reaching for a transcendence that involves increased knowledge and love. Every experience that moves beyond an individual's old reference frame and results in greater knowledge and love is a spiritual experience. A state of spiritual wellness consists of the active pursuit of spiritual development or a balanced openness to spiritual development. By adopting a holistic and theoretical approach to personality, therapists are able to help and guide the whole person rather than simply addressing one aspect of the person's life. Furthermore, spiritual wellness involves psychological wellness and requires the adoption of a transcendental rather than humanistic view. Spiritual psychotherapy seeks answers from a transcendent God. Spiritual wellness integrates all dimension of life, including spirituality, with each other ([Baldwin, 2003](#)).

As noted by [Moberg and Brusek \(1978\)](#), spiritual well-being is comprised of two dimensions, the first involving the relationship of a person with a higher power within a certain system of religious beliefs, and the second involving the sense of meaning and purpose in life. According to this definition, meaning and purpose in life can be independent from a certain religious structure.

The [National Interfaith Coalition on Aging \(NICA, 1975\)](#) defined spiritual well-being as the affirmation of wholeness which is blessed and fostered in relationship of life with God, self, society, and environment. [Ellison \(1983\)](#) stated that researchers had emphasized the significance of the need to discover the qualities of well-being. The above definition by [NICA \(1975\)](#) treats spiritual well-being as a two-dimensional concept, i.e., religious and psychosocial. [Ellison \(1983\)](#) regards these dimensions as horizontal and vertical dimensions of spiritual well-being. While the vertical dimension expresses God or a higher power, the horizontal dimension expresses purpose in and satisfaction with life.

[Opatz \(1986\)](#) defined spiritual well-being as willingness to seek the meaning and purpose of human existence, a habit of questioning everything, and the comprehension of abstract things that cannot be explained or understood easily. A spiritually good person seeks harmony between the forces inside and outside himself. [Paloutzian and Ellison \(1982\)](#) drew attention to public (religion) and private (existential harmony) interpretations of spiritual practices and suggest that spiritual well-being can be better understood if it is examined through these two dimensions. [Kamya \(2000\)](#) stated that spiritual well-being is a powerful predictor of self-esteem and ability to cope effectively with challenges and distresses, and examines spiritual well-being in two dimensions, demonstrating a positive relationship between belief in a higher being and feelings of meaning and purpose in life. [Chapman \(1987\)](#) points out that spiritual well-being is linked to the ability to reach one's full potential, to explore purpose



in life, to express oneself, and to take action. He also states that spiritual wellness fosters growth in love, fun, and peace through the pursuit of a satisfactory life and contribution to others to aid them improve their own spiritual health.

According to [Seaward \(1991\)](#), spiritual well-being incorporated concepts from many disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and theology which collaboratively create an integrated characteristic network and are expressed as emotions and behaviors within the spiritual paradigm. Spiritual well-being is a complicated concept influenced by a wide range of factors. As [Emmons \(1999\)](#) stated, spiritual efforts bring about better health and well-being. Perseverance in the pursuit of transcendental purposes provides a sense of empowerment, stability, support and direction in critical times. It also acts as a unifying force on the personality even under social and cultural conditions that would otherwise force the personality to splinter, and offers not only goals in life but also methods of reaching them.

No previous studies on spiritual well-being have been conducted in Turkey, and most studies on spirituality have been based on studies developed in other cultures. It is certain, however, that literature on spirituality cannot be disengaged from the cultural milieu in which it was produced. Therefore it is essential to be able to measure spiritual well-being with a scale developed for the culture under study. We have developed the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) with the aim of measuring the spiritual well-being of adults in Turkey.

## Methods

### Study Group

All data used in developing the SWBS was collected from adults. As the scale is intended to measure the spiritual well-being of adults of all kinds, adulthood was the only criterion required for participation. The ages of participants ranged from 16 to 54. The scale was administered to 498 females (57.6% of participants) and 367 males (42.4% of participants). The participants took preliminary versions of the SWBS through a website called Survey Monkey that collects data via the Internet.

### Analysis Method

As the first step in our Scale Development Study, we reviewed the literature about spiritual well-being and analyzed other scales developed previously to assess spiritual well-being or similar qualities. We then asked 57 adults interested in spiritual well-being to write compositions about the subject including clear and instructive definitions of it. Working within the framework of the data thus collected, we generated 170 items. We attempted to include sensual, cognitive, and behavioral items as [Katz and Stotland \(1959\)](#) recommended. Next, they were evaluated by three

experts in the field and the number of items was decreased to 74 through the removal of some items and the addition of others in response to their suggestions. The resulting 74-item draft of our scale was then shown to 15 other experts. In this process, each expert response was coded as one of three Likert types (1 = Item is suitable, 2 = Item should be revised, 3 = Item should be removed) on a questionnaire form that we provided to them. Experts were invited to make corrections if necessary, and blanks were left opposite the items for this purpose. Subsequently, the number of items was decreased to 51 through the removal of some items according to content validity rate as proposed by [Veneziano and Hooper \(1997\)](#). In addition, 18 items were edited again according to the experts' suggestions. Finally, in response to the feedback received in a pilot study, two more items were removed from the draft so that the draft finally consisted of 49 items. Answers to the items are to be given in a five-point rating scale (1 = Not applicable to me at all, 2 = Not applicable to me, 3 = Somewhat applicable to me, 4 = Quite applicable to me, 5 = Completely applicable to me).

After the pilot study, the instructions accompanying the scale were also edited. The scale in its final form was then administered to actual subjects: 897 adults in total. When all results were examined, 32 response forms were found to have been filled out incorrectly or were incomplete and were accordingly removed from the evaluation. Thus useable data were acquired from 865 subjects in total and scale development analyses were begun.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Two statistics programs were used for data analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was performed on the data in order to assess the SWBS's validity. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was examined by means of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) parameter and the Bartlett sphericity test. In exploratory factor analysis, the Principal Component Technique ([Kleinbaum, Kupper & Muller, 1987](#); [Zeller & Karmines, 1978](#)) was used. After exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the same data set to analyze the relations between factors. In order to assess the scale's reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated.

## **Findings**

### **Reliability Analyses**

Reliability that indicates the consistency of a range of measurements according to [Cronbach \(1990\)](#), is related to how correctly a test or measurement tool measures as well as to the consistency of the results obtained in different measurements ([Thompson, 2003](#)). There are certain statistical methods for measuring the reliability of Likert-type scales and for assessing the internal consistency of scales and their subdimensions ([Tavakol & Dennick, 2011](#)).



## Validity Analyses

Item analyses are conducted to determine whether the items of a measurement scale result in generating meaningful data, both together and within sub dimensions of the scale. As part of our scale's validity study, we performed factor analysis, a structural validity study that is used to determine how accurately the structure of the target characteristic is measured using this scale that aims to determine the scale's structure with regard to this feature (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Factor analysis has been used frequently in the fields of education, psychology, and health sciences in recent years. One of its benefits is that when complex statistical procedures are incorporated, the process enables us to compare similar data across many studies and experiments (Williams, Onsman, & Brown, 2010).

Two types of factor analyses exist. The first is the examination type, in which the researcher seeks information about the nature of the factors measured with the measurement tool rather than simply testing a certain hypothesis while remaining uninformed about the number of factors that the measurement tool measures. Exploratory factor analysis is another name for this type. The second type, which is used in experiments testing a hypothesis developed by a researcher in accordance with a theory, is confirmatory factor analysis (DeCoster, 1998). Both types of factor analyses were used in this scale's development. For validity procedures, factor analysis was performed first to determine groupings (factor) between items. Later on, KMO and Bartlett's Test Values were determined, analysis of basic components was conducted and, finally, varimax rotation procedures were carried out.

The suitability of our data for factor analysis was analyzed by means of the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and Bartlett's Sphericity test. The KMO coefficient indicates whether a data matrix is suitable for factor analysis and whether the data structure is suitable for factor extraction. For factorability, KMO should be higher than 0.60. Bartlett's test examines whether there is a relation between variables within the context of partial correlations. We also evaluated whether our research data were suitable for factor analysis by examining the KMO and Bartlett's Test results and analyzing them as shown in Table 1 below in sequence.

Table 1  
*KMO vs Bartlett's Test Value*

		.950
	Chi Square Value	15443.420
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Degree of freedom	406
	P	.000

The KMO test is important for testing both whether the range is sufficient and whether partial correlations are small or large. A good KMO score is close to 1 and an unacceptable score is lower than .50. In the present study, the KMO value for the

SWBS was found to be excellent (.95). The Barlett's test result was 15443.420 ( $< .00$ ), indicating that the values are meaningful and that the data used has a multivariate normal distribution.

The first factor analysis was performed on our 49 items. In the first analysis, when there is no rotation and the eigenvalue is set to 1, an eight-factor structure occurs. The eight factors that emerge explain 59.26% of the total variance. Our analyzes show that the factors with eigenvalues of 2 and over explain 47.15% of the total variance. In the social sciences, explanation of between 40 and 60% of variance is considered adequate. Thus the eigenvalue for our analyzes was set to 2, and the remaining analyzes were continued in this way. When the eigenvalue was set to 2, a three-factor structure emerged.

After this procedure, the analysis was continued using the Varimax rotation technique to determine whether the factors were independent of one another. This revealed that some items did not have the desired load values while others received a common load from multiple factors. Items scoring below ( $< .60$ ) were thus eliminated. The analysis was continuously repeated as items 8, 41, 10, 29, 31, 2, 7, 49, 35, 29, 15, 19, 1, 42, 22, 46, 36, 16, 37, and 6 were removed from the scale one by one; thus the scale took on its final form. The resulting 29-item scale assesses three sub dimensions of spiritual well-being in its final form. When the items in each sub dimension are examined, the sub dimensions correlate reasonably.

#### Scree Plot

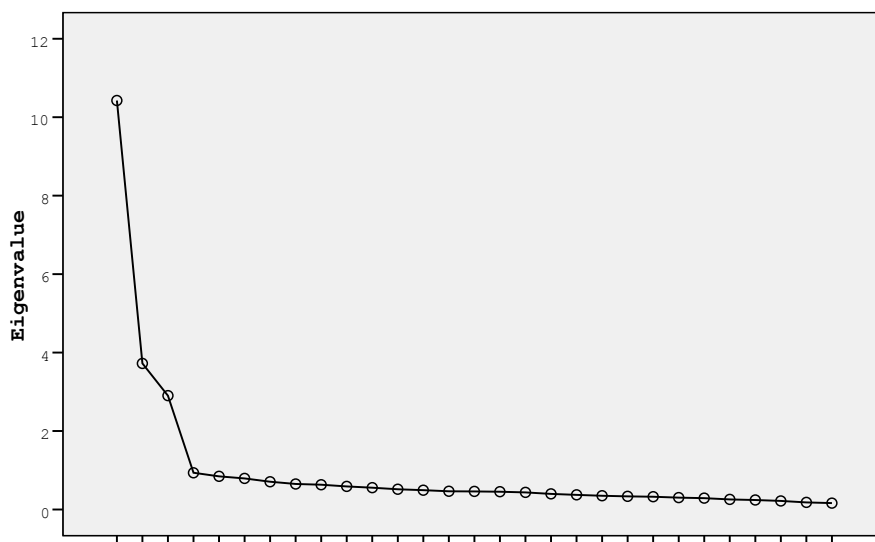


Figure 1. Scree plot.





As shown in Figure 1, the point where the graphical curve shows a rapid decline is after the third factor. Subsequently, the curve moves in the same direction. Given this, it is thought that the number of factors examined by the scale should be no more than three. Eigenvalues and cumulative variance percentages for the three factors found are shown in Table 2.

As can be seen from Figure 1 and Table 2, three factors emerge when the eigenvalue is set at 2 and continuous analysis is applied. The total variance of these three factors is 58.79%. The first factor was observed to explain 31.38% of variance, the second factor to explain 14.17%, and the third factor to explain 13.23%.

Table 2  
*Total Variance*

Factors	Initial Eigenvalue Totals			Total Factor Loads			Rotated Totals of Factor Loads		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	10.425	35.947	35.947	10.425	35.947	35.947	9.101	31.383	31.383
2	3.723	12.837	48.785	3.723	12.837	48.785	4.110	14.173	45.556
3	2.901	10.004	58.789	2.901	10.004	58.789	3.838	13.233	58.789
4	.936	3.226	62.015						
5	.845	2.913	64.928						
6	.791	2.728	67.657						
7	.707	2.438	70.094						
8	.650	2.240	72.334						
9	.631	2.176	74.510						
10	.588	2.027	76.537						
11	.555	1.914	78.451						
12	.515	1.777	80.228						
13	.492	1.695	81.923						
14	.464	1.600	83.524						
15	.460	1.586	85.110						
16	.452	1.559	86.669						
17	.436	1.503	88.172						
18	.397	1.370	89.542						
19	.373	1.285	90.827						
20	.350	1.205	92.033						

The final states of item status and loads are presented in Table 3:

Table 3  
*SWBS's Item-Factor Structure*

Items	Factors		
	Transcendence	Harmony with Nature	Anomie
Item 27	.881		
Item 48	.873		
Item 44	.862		
Item 11	.852		
Item 45	.824		
Item 21	.818		
Item 47	.797		
Item 39	.758		
Item 3	.727		
Item 14	.695		
Item 5	.693		
Item 25	.693		
Item 10	.669		
Item 33	.644		
Item 13	.638		
Item 26		.785	
Item 20		.761	
Item 12		.736	
Item 43		.725	
Item 4		.702	
Item 38		.699	
Item 32		.643	
Item 23			.819
Item 30			.778
Item 9			.744
Item 24			.705
Item 34			.701
Item 28			.665
Item 17			.643

When the eigenvalue is set to 2 and processed, it is seen that the scale consists of three factors and that the items in each factor have high values (the lowest item load value was .638 and the highest item load value was .881). There are no high-value common loads affecting all three of the factors.

As a next step, reliability analysis of each sub-factor is performed. The Cronbach Alpha values calculated on the basis of each factor are given in Table 4:

Table 4  
Cronbach's Alpha Value

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha Value
1 (Transcendence)	.953
2 (Harmony with Nature)	.864
3 (Anomie)	.853
Total	.886

As shown in Table 4, our statistical analysis of the reliability of the scale found that the the total reliability coefficients were sufficiently high to be acceptable in the social sciences. As for the reliability coefficients of the sub-dimensions, the Cronbach's Alpha value of the transcendence sub-factor is  $\alpha = .953$ , while that of the harmony with nature sub-factor is .864 and that of the anomie sub-factor is .853. The total Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated as  $\alpha = .886$ . These results suggest that the scale has high values at the point of internal consistency.

Table 5  
*Correlative Relations Between Sub-Factors*

Factors	Transcendence	Harmony with Nature	Anomie
Total	.885**	.585**	.230**
Transcendence	1	.425**	-.162**
Harmony with Nature		1	-.159**
Anomie			1

\*\* $p < .001$

As shown in Table 5, the sub-factors have a meaningful relationship with each other and with the total score in the positive direction as Pearson Correlation Analyses were conducted to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the factors determined on the scale. The correlation of the Transcendence sub-factor to the total score is ( $r = .885$ ;  $p < .001$ ), the correlation of the Harmony with Nature sub-factor to the total score is ( $r = .585$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and the correlation of the Anomie sub-factor to the total score is ( $r = .230$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that the sub-factors are strongly correlated to the scale. These results are important to show that all factors are within the same structure.

### Criterion Validity

In order to determine the criterion validity for the SWBS, we tested it against the Spiritual Orientation Scale developed by Kasapoğlu (2015) for the *Transcendence* sub-factor, against the *Self-denial* sub-factor of the Nature Loyalty Scale adapted to Turkish by Çakır, Karaarslan, Şahin, and Ertepinar (2015) for the *Harmony with Nature* sub-factor and against the Social Wellness Scale adapted to Turkish by Akin, Demirci, Çitemel, Sariçam, and Ocağcı (2013) for the *Anomie* sub-factor. Each sub-factor of the SWBS and the corresponding other scale or sub dimension were administered to 72 students. Pearson Correlation Analysis was performed to test the

criterion validity by determining correlative relationships between scales or sub-factors.

There is a significant positive relationship between the *Transcendence* Sub-factor of the SWBS and the Spiritual Orientation Scale ( $r = .94; p < .001$ ), between the *Harmony with Nature* Sub-factor of the SWBS and the *Self-denial* sub-factor of the Nature Loyalty Scale ( $r = .74; p < .001$ ) and between the *Anomie* Sub-factor of the SWBS and the Social Wellness Scale ( $r = .34; p < .003$ ). Thus statistically significant correlations were found between all subscales of the SWBS and other measurement instruments assessing the same values according to our criterion validity analysis, and the criterion validity of the SWBS is confirmed.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

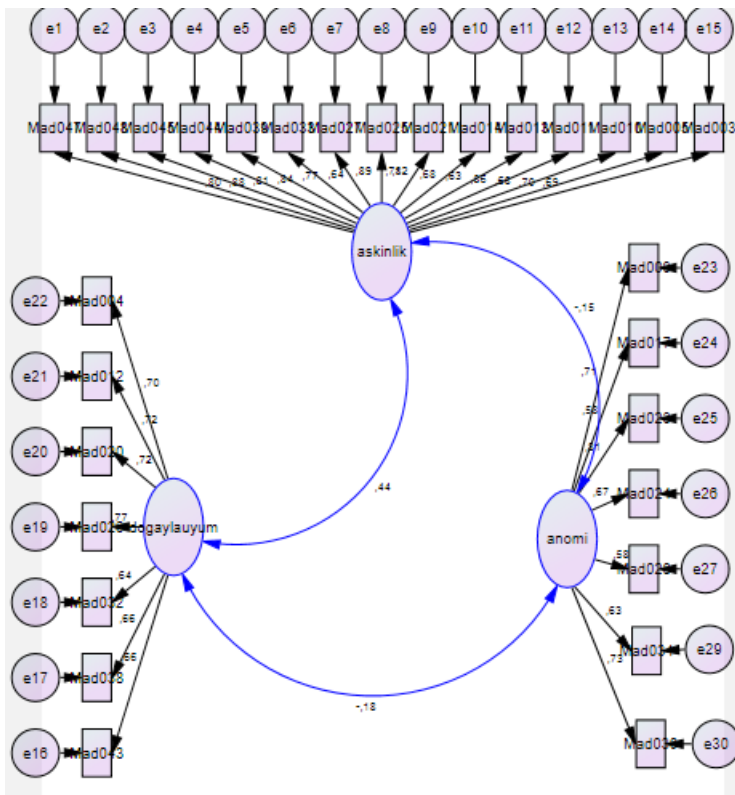


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis.

The confirmatory factor analysis of SWBS and the values between factors are shown in Figure 2. The goodness-of-fit indices of the scale are given in Table 6. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the same study group.



Table 6  
*Fit Indices*

Scale	$\chi^2/sd$	RMSA	S-RMR	NFI	CFI
	4.11	.060	.050	.90	.92

Note: RMSEA: Root-Mean-Square Error Approximation; S-RMR: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; NFI: Normed Fit Index; CFI: Comparative Fit Index

Fit indices define how compatible the analysis is with the trial data (McDonald & Ho, 2002). Our analysis showed that the data were in compliance with the model.

### Conclusion and Discussion

Descriptive factor analysis revealed the existence of three factors in the context of continuous analysis with an eigenvalue of 2. The total variance explained by these three factors is 58.79%. The scale items related to each factor were examined and the sub-factors were named. The first factor was called the “Transcendence” sub-factor, the second was called the “Harmony with Nature” sub-factor and the third was called the “Anomie” sub-factor.

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed in the last step, but first, the ratio of the chi-square value to the degree of freedom was checked. The chi-square value is the traditional measure used to assess a model’s overall fit; it evaluates the magnitude of the discrepancy between data and covariance matrices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). There are certain limitations of the chi-square value when it is used as a fit index in analysis. The most important of these is its sensitivity to sample size. Chi-square value is sensitive to sample size because it is essentially a statistical significance test, and it almost always rejects the model when large samples are used (Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). Given this, in this study which has a large sample size (865 individuals), it is acceptable that the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom is somewhat high ( $\chi^2 /sd = 4.11$ ) relative to the range of acceptable values (2–5) (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). For this reason, other adjustment indices should be taken into consideration. The next index, RMSA (Root Mean-Square Error Approximation), indicates how well the unknown but optimally chosen coefficient estimates fit the model’s data covariance matrix (Byrne, 1998). Though there are various opinions on the value of RMSA, a score between .08 and .10 is generally believed to indicate a moderate fit and a score below .08 to indicate a good fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). In our working model, as seen in Table 6, the RMSA value is .060 and corresponds to a good fit. In another index, SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), a score below .08 corresponds to a good fit and a score below .10 corresponds to a moderate fit (Brown, 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1999). For the NFI (Normed Fit Index), Bentler and Bonnet (1980) and Byrne (1994) had stated that a score of .90 or above corresponds to a good fit; the .90 NFI value

in our model thus indicates a good fit. The next index, the CFI (Comparative Fit Index), is included in all Structural Equation Model programs and is one of the most commonly used fit indices since it is one of the measures least affected by sample size (Fan, Thompson, & Wang, 1999). CFI values exceeding .95 indicate a perfect fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999), while values over .85 indicate an acceptable fit (Bollen, 1989). The CFI value in the working model (.92) indicates a good fit.

As a result of this validity and reliability analysis, the SWBS is shown to measure the spiritual well-being of adults in a reliable and valid manner. It should be noted that this scale has not been tested for validity and reliability in children.

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## Appendix

### Spiritual Well-Being Scale

	Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeleri okuduktan sonra kendinizi değerlendirip sizin için en uygun seçeneğin numarasını işaretleyiniz. Numaraların anlamları: (1) Bana Hiç Uygun Değil (2) Bana Uygun Değil (3) Bana Biraz Uygun (4) Bana Oldukça Uygun (5) Bana Tamamen Uygun Lütfen her ifadeye mutlaka TEK yanıt veriniz ve kesinlikle BOŞ bırakmayınız. En uygun yanıtları vereceğinizi ümit eder katkılarımız için teşekkür ederiz.					Bana hiç uygun değil	Bana uygun değil	Bana biraz uygun	Bana oldukça uygun	Bana tamamen uygun
1.	İlahi bir güce bağlı olmak bana güven verir.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
2.	Doğaya saygı duyulması gerektiğini düşünürüm.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
3.	Hayata dair bir hoşnutsuzluk duygusu hissederim.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
4.	Bir problemle karşılaştığımda Allah'ın yardımını hissederim.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
5.	Allah'ın gizli ve açık tüm duygu ve düşüncelerimi bildiğine inanırım.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
6.	Bütün canlıların saygıyı hak ettiğini düşünürüm.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
7.	Hayatımda büyük bir boşluk var.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
8.	Günlük hayatta Allah'ın kudretine şahit olurum.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
9.	Allah'ın beni sevdiğine ve önemseydiğine inanırım.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
10.	Yeryüzündeki tüm canlılara iyi davranırım.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
11.	Hayattan zevk almam.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
12.	Hayatımın her anında Allah'ın varlığını hissederim.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
13.	Daha güçlü bir varlığa sığınma duygusu beni rahatlatır.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
14.	Kendimi doğanın bir parçası olarak görürüm.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
15.	Hayatımın amacını halen bulabilmiş değilim.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
16.	Yaşadığım her olayda bir hayır olduğuna inanırım.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
17.	İnancım, nasıl bir hayat süreceğime dair bana yol gösterir.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
18.	Yeryüzündeki bütün canlıların hakları benim için önemlidir.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
19.	Sorunlarımı çözmeye nereden başlayacağımı bilemem.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
20.	Yalnız kaldığımda Allah'ı ve yarattıklarını düşünürüm (tefekkür ederim).	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
21.	İnanç ve değerlerim, zorluklar karşısında dayanabilme gücümü artırır.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
22.	Doğayla uyum içinde yaşarım.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
23.	Zorluklar yaşadığımda bunalmış hissederim.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
24.	İnancım, yaşadığım sıkıntılarda dahi olumlu tarafların olabileceğini görmemi sağlar.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
25.	Hayatta hiçbir şey sebepsiz değildir.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
26.	Hayatın beni mutsuz eden olaylardan ibaret olduğunu düşünürüm.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
27.	Her şeyin elimde olmadığını bilmek üzüldüğüm olaylar karşısında bir teselli kaynağıdır.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
28.	Yeryüzündeki her doğal varlığı eşsiz olduğuna inanırım.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
29.	Dünya hayatının geçici olduğuna inanmak beni hırslarımdan arındırır.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				

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Research Article

# Religion and Spirituality in the Life of Individuals with Paraplegia: Spiritual Journey from Trauma to Spiritual Development

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## Abstract

Traumatic experiences that leave deep traces on people's lives can lead to negative outcomes, as well as positive outcomes like maturation, growth and development. The experience known as post-traumatic growth is largely the result of one's religious and spiritual tendencies. At the same time, traumatic experiences can lead to changes in people's religious and spiritual lives. The aim of this research is to reveal the effects of paraplegic individuals' religious and spiritual tendencies on their post-traumatic growth and the changes that a traumatic experience causes in one's religious and spiritual life. The phenomenological design is used in research with a qualitative nature like this. Data were collected through interviews that were performed over 15 adults with spinal cord injuries. The obtained data were analyzed through the technique of content analysis. The themes that emerged from analysis are: ways of dealing with trauma, changes in attitudes towards God, religious practices, changes in belief in fate and an afterlife, religious participation. According to the research results, some individuals with spinal cord injuries benefit from religion and spirituality; a great majority overcome the situation by accepting it in order to cope with the traumatic experience. Many changes take place positively in these paraplegics' religious and spiritual lives in the aftermath of their traumatic experiences, strengthening their faith in what they believe in and their ties with God. This shows that after a traumatic experience, great changes can occur in one's religious and spiritual life.

## Keywords

Post-traumatic growth • Spirituality • Religion • Paraplegia • Phenomenology

## Omurilik Felci Geçiren Bireylerin Yaşamında Din ve Maneviyat: Travma ile Başa Çıkılmadan Travma Sonrası Manevi Gelişime Yolculuk

### Öz

İnsanların yaşamında derin izler bırakan travmatik deneyimler olumsuz sonuçlar doğurmasının yanı sıra olgunlaşma, büyüme ve gelişim olarak ifade edebileceğimiz olumlu sonuçlara da yol açabilmektedir. Travma sonrası gelişim olarak ifade edilen bu deneyimin gerçekleşmesinde insanların sahip olduğu dini ve manevi eğilimlerin rolü büyüktür. Aynı zamanda geçirilen travmatik deneyimler kişilerin dini ve manevi yaşantısında değişimlere sebep olabilmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı omurilik felci geçiren bireylerin dini ve manevi eğilimlerinin travma sonrası gelişim üzerindeki etkisini ve travmatik yaşantının dini ve manevi yaşantıda meydana getirdiği değişimleri ortaya koymaktır. Nitel bir doğaya sahip olan araştırmada fenomenoloji deseni kullanılmıştır. Veriler görüşme yöntemi ile toplanmış ve omurilik felci olan 15 yetişkinle görüşme yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda ortaya çıkan temalar şunlardır: Travma ile başa çıkma yolları, Allah'a dair tutumlarda değişim, dini pratikler, ahiret ve kader inancında değişim, dini katılım. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre omurilik felçli bireylerden bazıları travma yaşantısı ile başa çıkmak için din ve maneviattan faydalansa da çoğunluğu yaşadığı durumu kabullenerek başa çıkmıştır. Yaşanan olaydan sonraki süreçte ise felçli kişilerin dini ve manevi yaşantısında pozitif yönde pek çok değişim meydana gelmiş; inandıkları din ve Tanrıyla olan bağları güçlenmiştir. Bu durum bize travmatik deneyimlerin ardından dini ve manevi yaşantıda büyük değişimler meydana gelebileceğini göstermiştir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Travma sonrası gelişim • Maneviyat • Din • Omurilik felci • Fenomenoloji

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People are potentially faced with many traumatic events throughout their lives. Traumatic life events have been examined such as physical assaults or violence; traffic or work accidents; floods, hurricanes, or natural disasters such as earthquakes; surviving war or terrorist events; witnessing injuries or death; life-threatening diseases and life-damaging injuries (Frans, Rimmö, Aberg & Fredrikson, 2006; Widom, Dutton, Czaja & DuMont, 2005). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a category defined in the literature as the group of intense, long-lasting symptoms that occur after an event, sometimes long after (Gelder, Gath, Mayou & Cowen, 1996). The main clinical features of this diagnosis are extreme agitation after the start of the traumatic event, frequent recollection of related events, and emotional avoidance (American Psychiatric Association, 2007; Taylor, Kuch, Koch, Crockett & Passey, 1998). After feeling extreme fear, helplessness, or dementia about surviving, a person begins to have difficulty placing their new situation in existing cognitive schemes, questioning their place and meaning in the world; the individual's assumptions that the world is a reliable, predictable place are destroyed (Aker, 2000; Janoff-Bulman & Berg, 1998; Türkçapar, 2012). Traumatic experiences, on the other hand, can lead to positive changes such as re-questioning the meaning of life, revising one's perceptions of empowerment, redefining priorities, and improving relations (Inci & Boztepe, 2013; Tedeschi, 1999). Some researchers (Tedeschi, 1999; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) consider these changes, which can be positive or negative, as an opportunity for personal development. Accordingly, individuals can sometimes even experience the opposite of expected destructive symptoms after a traumatic experience, and this may even force them beyond the limits of the challenge to benefit more effectively from life than they did before the trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

The positive changes a person experiences following a traumatic situation are defined as perceived benefits, stress-related growth, or post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi, Park & Calhoun, 1998; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). According to Tedeschi (1999), the results of reported trauma vary from person to person but tend to enter certain categories: relations with others (primarily points to inter-personal behaviors), new possibilities (indicates changes in goals), increased sense of personal power (implies a change in identity), and spiritual change and life appreciation (refers to a change in certain aspects of the belief system; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) found their scale, the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory, to have five sub-dimensions. Janoff-Bulman's (2004) important study explains what the relationship processes of beliefs, goals, identity, and interpersonal behavior are and how they are formed in order to understand post-traumatic growth. As cited in Tedeschi (1999), changes in basic life goals have been described by Carver and Scheier (1998); McIntosh (1996); and Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982). The issue of interpersonal relationships and behaviors has been addressed by many theorists (Tedeschi, 1999). Writers like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard have also

discussed the role of pain in personal development, although they introduced different interpretive styles. In the 20th century, scientists such as Maslow (1954), Caplan (1964), Frankl (1963), and Yalom (1980) showed that life crises are a path to change. Existential psychologists acknowledge that suffering and stressful experiences are an opportunity for development and define trauma as a time when meaning and courage can be found (as cited in Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

The concept of post-traumatic growth has been a subject in all teachings since the early ages of human history, questioning the relationship of suffering felt after experiencing an event to the meaning of life. Buddhism, for example, comes from the premise that all existence is suffering and suggests concrete and ultimate ways of escaping from these unbroken lines of suffering that every human being experiences. Like Buddhism, yoga and all other Indian teachings cannot question the normality of suffering in the moment. Suffering is seen as an illusion because the whole universe is seen as an illusion. All other Indian movements that accept Indian beliefs (e.g., Lokayata and Çarvaka schools) have materialist tendencies that suggest that seeking pleasure/rewards and avoiding suffering are the only rational aims of man; they attribute a clear definition of the meaning and function of suffering (Eliade, 1994; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). In the Mediterranean region of Mesopotamia, the drama of man's torment from the moon to the suffering of Tammuz is associated with the suffering of the gods in many myths. Ancient adaptations and imitations of ancient mysticism on the suffering, death, and resurrection that Tammuz experienced can be seen in the entire world of Eastern Antiquity, and traces of this scenario continue up to and beyond Christianity and post-Christian Gnosticism. One of the greatest advantages of Christianity compared to the old Mediterranean beliefs is said to be how it gives great importance to suffering, transforming it from a painful negative situation into a positive spiritual experience (Eliade, 1994).

According to Islamic belief, the world is a temporary place of trial, and man has been sent to this world for a very short time. After death, each soul is believed to be requited in accordance with justice through the righteousness of Allah. Believing in the afterlife can save one from the anxiety and stress encountered while enabling acceptance of death, as well as giving an individual an idea of what will be gotten in return for the patience one shows to the troubles and obstacles encountered in this world, thereby providing them with a sense of trust, ease, spaciousness, and peace (Cesur, 2012; Hogan & DeSantis, 1996; Kula, 2004). Apart from beliefs regarding afterlife and forbearance, individuals are presumed to use active and meaningful coping strategies in solving all kinds of problems during prayer where they worship in the personal sense of the self being together with God (Kula, 2004). Vergote (1999) noted that prayer has a positive effect on people's physical and mental health, and on coping with situations that lead to depression. In terms of Islam, prayer and worship



can be expressed as addressing a request toward God and accepting the supremacy of God by admitting one's weakness in front of God; prayer and worship is interpreted as a way for the soul to ascend toward God, an action of love and adoration toward the Being who creates the wonder and miracle of life (Kula, 2004).

In recent years both in the international arena and in Turkey, many important studies have begun being carried out over the role of beliefs on coping styles in stressful situations (Gorsuch, 1988; Pargament, 1997; Pargament, Koenig & Perez, 2000; Eryücel, 2013). Pargament and colleagues (Pargament, 1990, 1997; Pargament, Smith, Koenig & Perez, 1998), who have extensively researched this subject, emphasize that the religious methods used in coping strategies far exceed non-religious methods of coping, and spirituality is unique from other coping strategies in the sense that it provides results beyond what has been predicted to be good for health and wellbeing. In addition, studies exist that show belief in an afterlife eases adjusting to life post-trauma (Cesur, 2012; Hogan & DeSantis, 1996). In another study, fulfilling religious practices was found to positively affect people's grieving process (Becker et al., 2007).

The literature shows how important the role of religion and spirituality is for individuals, especially when in crises. For human integrity, the obstacle that suddenly emerges and prevents action in many ways can be regarded among the most difficult situation that one might possibly encounter.

The population of the study consists of paraplegics whose affliction resulted from a sudden accident, and the study was carried out with a group who had never previously participated in any similar research. In fact, although studies on the role of religion and spirituality in the growth of individuals and the disabled who have experienced various trauma exist in the literature, (Hatun, Yavuz-Birben, İnce & Kalkan-Yeni; 2016; Lee, Park & Hale, 2016; Shaw, Joseph & Linley, 2005), no study exists on individuals with spinal cord injuries and their spiritual growth, a sub-dimension of post-traumatic growth (Hatun et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Perera & Frazier, 2013; Shaw et al., 2015; Williamson, 2014). In this respect, examining the role of religious beliefs in paraplegics' process of coping with traumatic experiences and their changes in religious/spiritual experiences following traumatic experiences becomes important in terms of its contributions both to clinical practices and the literature. The following questions are asked in the survey:

- How have those with spinal cord injuries coped with their traumatic event? What role do religious beliefs play in the post-traumatic growth process?
- What kind of changes occurred in paraplegics' attitudes towards God following their traumatic event?

- What kind of changes occurred in religious practices following paraplegics' traumatic event?
- What kind of changes occurred in paraplegics' beliefs regarding the concept of an afterlife and fate following their traumatic event?
- What kind of changes occurred in paraplegics' religious participation after their traumatic events?

## Method

### Research Model

The study aims to reveal the effect of religion and spirituality on paraplegics' posttraumatic growth experiences. Furthermore, the kinds of changes in religious and spiritual experiences that these traumatic experiences caused have been examined. For this purpose, the qualitative research method was used. Qualitative research methodology allows gathering in-depth and detailed information on any issue with the participation of a limited number of people. Qualitative research allows for a flexible and holistic approach to investigating human behaviors in the environment from which they emerged (Patton, 2014, Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). The phenomenological research design was used in this study. Phenomenological research focuses on the experiences individuals have had and how they perceive these experiences (Ersoy, 2016). This research focuses on the experiences of individuals who experienced an accident that resulted in a spinal cord injury and how they make sense of the religious and spiritual changes they experience. For this reason, one can say phenomenology is the most appropriate design for this research.

The research population consists of 15 adults between the ages of 27 and 57 with paralysis resulting from spinal cord trauma. The population group was determined in accordance with the purposive sampling method, a type of sampling widely used in accordance with the qualitative research tradition. Purposive sampling provides rich, in-depth information as opposed to making generalizations (Patton, 2014, Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). From among the purposive sampling methods, criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). The criteria for participants in this study were: to be suffering from paralysis as a result of spinal cord trauma, to be older than 18, and to have had at least three years pass since their traumatic event happened. The reason for the age limit of 18 is because the study's topic is a philosophical subject that requires a level of cognitive maturity. Indeed, all the scales developed for measuring post-traumatic growth (posttraumatic growth factors, stress-related growth scales, and perceived benefit scales) have been prepared for adults (McMillen & Fisher,

1998; Park, Cohen & Murch, 1996; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). The reason for the event having happened at least three years prior is the real need for a certain period of growth following the trauma. One should have had time to think about and internalize what they'd experienced in this period (Sarisoy, 2012).

Individual characteristics of the research participants are summarized in Table 1. Participants' names have not been recorded due to ethical issues; coding for male (M43, M36, etc.) and female participants (F56, F37, etc.) indicates gender and age.

Table 1  
*Participants' Demographic Characteristics*

Participant	Gender	Age	Completed Education Level	Years Since Event Occurred
P1	Male	43	Primary school	32
P2	Male	36	Middle School	9
P3	Male	45	Primary school	26
P4	Male	53	University	33
P5	Male	29	High school	5
P6	Female	56	Middle School	18
P7	Female	53	Primary school	8
P8	Male	54	Middle School	6
P9	Female	37	Primary school	12
P10	Female	57	Primary school	11
P11	Female	55	High school	22
P12	Male	53	High school	11
P13	Female	57	Primary school	43
P14	Male	27	High school	11
P15	Male	35	High school	7

### **Development of the Data Collection Tool**

A semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions was used to investigate the effect of religion and spirituality on the post-traumatic growth experiences of paraplegic individuals in the study. The semi-structured interview allows for both a fixed-choice answer and in-depth response to the relevant area. It is one of the most preferred data collection techniques for qualitative research because of the ease of analysis, its ability to acquire in-depth information when necessary, and those being interviewed can express themselves (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2014).

The researchers developed interview questions in the direction of the research after an extended literature review. Participants' characteristics were taken into account when preparing the questions. The results of the researchers' common decisions were presented to two faculty members with expertise in qualitative research. The final version of the form has been rearranged in accordance with the experts' suggestions. The interview form consists of two parts. In the first part, demographic information such as gender, age, education level and time since the traumatic event occurred are included in Table 1. In the second part, information about what happened, how

they coped with the situation during and after this process and questions about the changes that took place in religious spiritual life is included in Appendix 1. Because of the limited number of participants, a pilot study was not possible in the process of developing the data collection tool.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In the research process, data were gathered through face-to-face interviews. The interview method is frequently used in phenomenological investigations (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). Interviews took place in Istanbul in 2016 at various associations where individuals with spinal cord injuries often go. All interviews were conducted by the researcher who has knowledge and experience with interviewing. The interview process lasted about 2 months. The researcher conducted the research with the participants when they were available, in accordance with the directions of the association's associate director.

All interviews were conducted with people working at the Turkish Spinal Cord Injury Association (TOF) and with people continuing their lives at the center-based nursing homes. Necessary permissions for the interviews were received from the association, and even the association manager provided major support to the work, stating this is the first time such a subject would be studied. Many interviewees also gave similar responses to the questions during the exercises; they stated that they hadn't been asked any questions about changes in their religious or spiritual viewpoints after their traumatic experience, and this made them surprised and happy. Individuals with spinal cord injuries, who had to continue their lives with the same result for very different reasons, were observed to have created a living space for themselves within the association, showing that they are not alone and collaborating with each other over their problems.

Before performing the interviews, information was provided as to the purpose and content of the research. Participants voluntarily participated in the research, and no ethical principles were violated in any way. Interviews were conducted in an environment where participants felt comfortable. Interviews were recorded on a voice recorder with the participants' permission. In addition to using a voice recorder, important points made during the interviews were noted by the researcher. The investigator transcribed the data collected through interviews without making any changes. During transcription, participants who gave inadequate responses were identified and re-interviewed, thus preventing data loss.

Data collected in the study were analyzed using content analysis, a systematic, reproducible technique where certain words of a text are summarized by smaller content categories using specific rule-based coding (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014). The basic process in content analysis is to classify similar data within the framework of





specific concepts and themes, and to interpret them by arranging them so that the reader can understand (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013).

Data analysis was performed manually and inductively. First, the researcher studied the transcripts several times to become better acquainted with them. Then, the answers given to each question were read in order; the main ideas and concepts were briefly noted alongside the answers. These were then categorized by coding the data one by one. In the last stage, the representative themes were created to best encapsulate the codes. The researcher was careful to be terse and concise while naming the themes and categories. In the next stage, the analysis was investigated, and necessary corrections were made by another researcher. Three researchers participated in the analysis to reach a common consensus regarding the interpretation. The analysis results were then presented to two faculty members with expertise in qualitative research. Minor changes were made in the direction of the received suggestions, which provided the final form of the analysis.

### Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

In this section, the analytical findings for the data obtained from the interviews with the paraplegics participating in the research are compared with the findings and interpretations from studies in the related literature. The resulting content analysis resulted in five themes: ways of dealing with trauma, changes in attitudes towards God, religious practices, changes in belief in fate and an afterlife, and religious participation. In addition, these themes have been divided into sub-categories.

#### Ways of Dealing with Trauma

Post-traumatic growth is not a direct consequence of the traumatic event; it happens as a result of the struggle for surviving and coping with trauma (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Tedeschi, Calhoun & Groleau, 2015; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). A number of coping methods have been used in the psychology literature for successfully dealing with adverse life events (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

Table 2  
*Ways of Dealing with Trauma*

Theme	Categories	Number of participants
Ways to deal with trauma	Religion as a coping strategy	2
	Searching for the meaning of life	1
	Acceptance	8
	Participating in a paraplegic association and voluntary activities	5
	Social support	3

As seen in Table 2, the ways participants use to cope with their trauma are categorized as using religion as a coping strategy, searching for the meaning of life, acceptance, participating in volunteer activities and TOF activities and social support.

Two research participants with Islamic beliefs referred to using their religious beliefs for dealing with their trauma. M36 expressed:

Then I seek refuge in God, who can see everything and helps His creatures. You experience this thing between life and death, then a new life here now has started and been presented to me. I am strong. I started fighting, not alone. I started to control everything physically. My biggest success in this has been faith. My point of view changed.

When examining studies in the literature on post-traumatic growth, religion and spirituality are seen to affect the trauma victims' experience of post-traumatic growth (Ai, Peterson, & Huang, 2003; Calhoun, Cann, Tedeschi, & McMillan, 2000; Overcash, Calhoun, Cann, & Tedeschi, 1996; O'Rourke, Tallman, & Altmaier, 2008). Called religious coping, this process means using one's faith when struggling with stress and problems (Pargament, 2001). Exposure to a traumatic situation, such as a spinal cord injury, which will affect a person's entire life, also requires one to use coping mechanisms throughout life. Hatun et al. (2016) also found that the religious coping style increases disabled individuals' ability to adapt. The way they use religious coping depends on how religion is placed in their life. From this point of view, as few participants used religious coping, the place of religion in participants' lives can be interpreted as being low.

One research participant deals with their trauma by searching for the meaning of life. As an example, M53 expressed:

Life has completely changed for me. I've encountered another world. What I didn't expect was a world I did not design? Hence, I got confused in the first years, of course. It was a life that was not my own. I thought this way, I did. Then I began a life that was not so strange to me in the process. I overcame this it. While I live here in the world, I must have a role in breathing. So I discovered that, after asking, I had to do something like this for those in my life because I also had to experience other events. That helped me get past my injuries.

One factor that explains how and why individuals grow post-trauma is the process of finding meaning (Park & Ai, 2006). The search for meaning is one of the most frequently addressed questions in the literature regarding the challenges faced by people and post-traumatic growth (Calhoun et al., 2000; Park, Edmondson, Fenster, & Blank, 2008; Triplett, Tedeschi, Cann, Calhoun, & Reeve, 2012). According to Frankl (2014), the strength needed for dealing with injury and trauma is to find meaning in one's life.



Eight of the participants adopted acceptance as a method used for dealing with trauma. M27 expressed:

First I felt disappointed. Then I began the process of accepting shortly after the accident. It took me the first two years. Afterwards I slowly overcame that period. As you see, I'm here today. I'm working.

Similarly, M45 expressed:

This can happen to you. What God has given ... is there anything to do? There is nothing. It happens any way and we survive somehow. This is God's desire. Nothing can change this. Whatever is written in your destiny, you will live it. There is nothing to be done. In any case, you live with it. I mean, for example, I never thought about other peoples' glances at me or why they asked why I'm like this. Sometimes people talk about your situation... He said don't ask about his story because it makes him unhappy... I never thought in that way. What have I done? This is Allah's will, fate. Nothing can be done once it happens. His life is like this and my life is like this, so.... You accept it as is, somehow. So we go continue our life this way. It's still like this. You are standing against it, but what happens if you stand up?

A person's cognitive processes play a role in post-traumatic growth. The traumatic events people experience lead to a change in existing schema (Valdez & Lilly, 2015; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). When a person accepts the reality of an experienced event, acceptance comes to fruition (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Pargament (1997) stated that acceptance is one element of religious coping. It seems difficult to get involved in a struggle, to accept the traumatic event or the problem faced if one thinks about the nature of coping with obstacles. Denying what has happened without accepting the present situation is unsustainable in terms of mental health for paraplegics.

For four participants, their role in participating at the TOF and volunteer activities was significant for them in coping with their trauma. F55 expressed:

It is a difficult to have a spinal cord injury and get through that process; you first intensely judge the process. Dear God, why me? This type of questioning occurs too often. But my acute period coincided with the association's foundation. And with all the work I've done in the association, I've inserted myself into the background. I've overcome the situation of asking why me when I'm actively engaged in association activities by helping other disabled individuals. Then I suddenly realize that I have completely overcome the barrier and received the answer to the question because I feel chosen. I'm carrying a flag now. As high as I carry that flag, my next friend should carry it higher than me. This is my test; I am doing my duty in this world.

Participating in volunteer activities at the TOF increases the likelihood of paraplegics being able to cope with a stressful situation. Being together socially with people who are in similar situations makes them feel they are not alone. Thus, they are able to feel better psychologically.

Three participants in the study were able to deal with their trauma through the social support they received from their familial and social environments. For example, F57 expressed: In this process, my mother has been my greatest support. My parents are 85 years old now. There is fear and concern for what will happen to me and who will look after me.

Sources of social support that provide backing during difficult times can include parents, friends, spouse, lover, family, teachers, neighbors, relatives, and experts (Yıldırım, 2004; Oktan, 2005). Tedeschi, Park, and Calhoun (1998) emphasized social support as an important variable in post-traumatic growth, indicating that positive changes following the traumatic experience are possible with the presence of supporters. In addition, a number of studies exist in the literature that describe the effect of social support on post-traumatic growth (Bozo, Gündoğdu, & Büyükasik-Colak, 2009; Lelorain, Tessier, Florin, & Bonnaud-Antignac, 2011; Schmidt, Blank, Bellizzi, & Park, 2012; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009).

### Change in Attitudes toward God

The essential feature of religiosity is the cognitive dimension of belief. The strength of peoples’ beliefs, whatever they believe in, varies from person to person (Idler, 1999). Traumatic experiences can deeply affect the strength of these beliefs. Individuals can lose faith, as well as become more attached to God in the case of a traumatic experience.

Table 3  
*Change in Attitudes toward God*

Theme	Categories	Number of participants
Change in attitudes toward God	Deepening of faith in God	5
	Feeling closer to God	7
	Believing that God is bountiful	2
	Feeling distanced from God	1

The changes in attitudes toward God that took place in the participants’ lives is shown in Table 3. These have been categorized as deepening of faith in God, feeling closer to God, believing that God is bountiful, and feeling distanced from God. Four participants stated no change in their attitudes toward God.

Five research participants stated a change in their attitudes toward God as a deepening of their faith in God. For example, M45 stated:

I’ve always had faith in God. My faith has become even stronger. So it can change. You seek refuge in God.

Seven research participants showed their change in attitudes towards God as feeling closer to God. For example, M29 stated:



Commitment ... At least I was not alone ... For example, if there is no one in my life ... You are clinging more solidly to life. This is also mentioned in Quran too, you are alone in the room but actually not alone by yourself. I learned that; I put one more dish when I sit at the table. Even if I am the only one, I always have a guest. You're not alone, because if God created me, He did it for a reason. He's always with you if He created you.

Similarly, M36 said:

I am very close to my Lord. Yes, I nag Him and ask things of Him. God who gives and takes away commands that we should pray to Him. I offer my wishes for my sake, wanting while ashamed. I talk. I know I'm not alone. The greatest thing that has been given to me is being blessed in this life to have seen holy places and the Ka'bah in order to amend my mistakes at this young age. Thank goodness you will not leave this path. Thanks be to the Lord and guide us on the straight path. Everyone can take this road. He has preordained this path for everyone.

Two research participants' changes in attitudes are a way of believing that God is bountiful. M27 stated:

So I see this situation as a grace. I think that I am God's beloved one. I feel that He has provided me with difficulty but has not forgotten me.

Another research participant began to feel more distant from God after their event. M53 stated:

Even though my point of view towards the Creator has not changed, I feel far away from Him.

Survey results show that most of the participants' attitudes toward God have changed positively. Although participants have difficult living conditions, they feel closer to God and live more faithfully. [Lawrence \(1997\)](#) developed the God Image Inventory (GII) to investigate individuals' relationship with God and their image of God. The scale consists of the following sub-dimensions: presence, challenge, acceptance, benevolence, influence, providence, faith and salience. In [Lee et al. \(2016\)](#) study of 245 university students who had experienced a traumatic event, significant positive correlations exist between the number of traumatic events and their view of God from the subscales of religion and spirituality. After experiencing trauma, people sometimes more rigidly cling to God, religion, and belief; sometimes they can move away from or even change their faith. The majority of research participants having positive changes in their attitudes toward God might result from their religious beliefs (Islam), their faith in the concept of trials mentioned in the Qur'an, and their knowledge of parables and stories regarding the tribulations of the prophets. Another reason for this could be that their mental image of God has positive attributes; they see God as forgiving, compassionate, bounteous, and close to His servants.

## Religious Practices

One of the sources that people first resort and relate to when facing negative living conditions is their religious beliefs. In such cases, the first religious activity is prayer and asking for help from the creator. [Werdel and Wicks \(2012\)](#) stated that the most commonly used in the literature on post-traumatic growth religious practice is prayer. Religious practices usually consist of watching religious television programs or listening to religious radio programs, reading sacred books or other religious texts, contributing to religious institutions, and seeking forgiveness ([Fellow & Maryland, 1999](#)).

Table 4  
*Religious Practices*

Theme	Categories	Number of participants
Religious Practices	Making daily worship more regular and frequent	54
	Reading religious books	1
	Performing new religious practices	4
	Decrease in worship	

As shown in Table 4, the theme of religious practice, which is one of the changes in the participants' lives, is categorized as performing daily worship more regularly and frequently, reading religious books, performing new religious practices, and decreasing worship. Four research participants stated no change in their religious practice.

The change in religious practices for five research participants was to perform daily worship more regularly and frequently. For example, M54 stated:Of course we were praying, but not regularly. That was really the case. But now I pray 5 times a day.

The change in religious practices for one of the persons participating in the research was to read religious books. M53 expressed:

In other words, I began to observe the worship of many people in a universal sense, reading publications and sources. But as I was searching for the reality of what Allah considers decent as a Muslim, my Muslim identity had already been consolidated.

The change in religious practices for four research participants was to perform new religious practices. For example, F53 stated:

My father was an atheist and raised us this way. I started believing in God before the accident. I didn't know I wasn't worshipping. Now I pray a lot; I participate in Qur'an courses.

One participant's change in religious practices is doing less worship than before. For example, M53 stated, "I used to go to Friday prayers and I fasted. After the illness, it was difficult and I stopped doing these things."



Religious practices of some participants in the study increased while others' religious practices decreased or had no change. This can be a consequence of a change in beliefs and attitudes towards God after the trauma. The increase in the attachment of people to God and religion can lead to an increase in religious practices. Studies exist in the literature that show the relationship between post-traumatic growth and religious-spiritual practices.

The post-traumatic growth levels of the older participants performing religious practices more were found to be higher in the study of [Cadell, Regehr, and Hemsworth \(2003\)](#), conducted with 174 participants who had lost their relatives because of AIDS. [Levine, Aviv, Yoo, Ewing, and Au \(2009\)](#) found that 81% of women perform religious practices in a mixed designed (qualitative and quantitative) study conducted over 174 women with breast cancer. The research found that the levels of post-traumatic growth were higher in women who worshipped more.

### Changes in Belief in Fate and an Afterlife

As shown in Table 5, one of the changes in the lives of the participants is in their belief in fate and an afterlife; this theme can be sub-categorized as forming belief in fate and an afterlife, better understanding of fate and the afterlife, and an increase in thoughts of death. Nine of the participants stated no change in their belief in fate and an afterlife.

Table 5  
*Belief in the Afterlife and Fate*

Theme	Categories	Number of participants
Changes in Belief in the Afterlife and Fate	Forming belief in fate and the afterlife	1
	Better understanding of fate and the afterlife	3
	Thinking more about death	1

One participant's change belongs to the sub-theme of forming belief in fate and an afterlife. F53 expressed,

I began to believe in Allah after the accident. Fate and the Hereafter were later formed in my faith.

Three research participants' changes belong to the sub-theme of better understanding of fate and the afterlife.

For example, F37 expressed:

I thought about whether I could have changed fate. Because God offers preliminary opportunities. Let's say we have 2 options: It's up to us to do it, or it's our own will. We choose one, but do we know the result? We don't know. Can we see? No, we don't know whether the result will be good or bad. Our destiny is shaped by that decision. I wish I could have chosen another way, and I asked myself, "Could I have made a difference?" I think about it. Let's say I didn't fall from the balcony. Would it have happened again if the car

had hit me on the road? If I experience it and this happens, than this means it is my destiny and I live a disabled life. I always think logically.

One research participant’s change in belief belongs to the sub-theme of thinking more about death. M27 stated:

I started thinking more about death.

Faith in fate and the hereafter are among the elements of being religious (Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975). While the research results show some paraplegics have changed their beliefs in fate and the hereafter, the majority stated no change in beliefs on fate and the hereafter. Similarly, Lee et al. (2016) study of 245 university students investigating the relationships among being exposed to trauma with religiosity and spirituality showed that being exposed to a traumatic event is not associated with one’s belief in the hereafter, which is one of the sub-dimensions of religiosity and spirituality.

Belief in an afterlife and fate is one of the most debated topics among clergymen and occupies most peoples’ minds, whatever they believe in. Therefore, experiencing such trauma can also affect these beliefs. As can be seen, five participants changed their beliefs in the afterlife and fate. Even one participant who had been an atheist in the past formed a belief in the hereafter and fate.

### Religious Involvement

As shown in Table 6, one of the changes in the lives of the participants is spiritual involvement; this can be categorized in three sub-themes: failing to attend due to physical disability, receiving religious education, and going to the mosque. Five participants said they had never participated in activities of religious organizations.

Table 6  
*Religious Involvement*

Theme	Categories	Number of participants
Religious Involvement	Failing to attend due to physical disability	4
	Receiving religious education	4
	Going to the mosque	2

Four research participants stated being unable to participate in religious practices because of their physical disability. For example, F55 expressed:

We usually cannot enter mosques, but we can comfortably do this abroad because there are ramps. We do not have this in our mosques. We have lost many friends. We could only see their funeral from very far. We couldn’t ascend the stairs to where we were going. I mean, we cannot reach many places, but everywhere belongs to God and I worship here, I feel like I go to Friday prayer.

Four research participants started receiving religious education. For example, F57 described,





Here again we have religious education. We have memorized what we have altogether forgotten. Normally I cannot go to courses or anything. We took the course here.

Two research participants stated going to mosques for religious involvement. For example, M45 expressed:

After the accident I went to Friday prayer. I even go in the village. In the village, also ... we have some problems because we have discomfort... Because you are like that, your prayers will not be accepted ... There are rumors like this, okay? For example, one day (I couldn't believe this) I went to the mosque and I asked an instructor about having these troubles, I asked the mosque's leader, ok? Some people say that my prayers are not acceptable. If you come to the mosque your prayers will not be accepted. "There is no such thing," he said. "Allah is testing you with this. Never think about anything in your life like that; you are accepted with your imperfections," he said. "Worship how you want," he said, "There is no such thing. Don't worry about what other people say." So I went on like that.

According to the research results, some of the paraplegic participants do not participate religiously because of their physical disability, while others do. Religious participation is a concept with both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions. Religious participation mostly involves official religious institutions such as mosques, churches, synagogues, temples, ashrams, and so on (Idler, 1999). Religious participation, a dimension of religiosity, is associated with post-traumatic growth (Pargament, 1997; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). One seeks religious activity in the post-traumatic growth process. Moreover, religious participation triggers people's spiritual maturity of the people (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Religious participation also affects subjective psychological well-being. Greenfield and Marx's (2007) study conducted with 3,032 adults aged between 25 and 74 years old shows that more participation in religious institutions positively affect and increased life satisfaction.

Although some participants were unable to engage in religious participation because of being physically disabled, other participants increased their participation in religious activities. One can say that when religious participation is considered as a requirement of religious belief, individuals who show positive changes in their attitudes toward God show an increase in participation in religious activities.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The aim of this research is to reveal the effect of paraplegics' religious and spiritual tendencies on their post-traumatic growth. Moreover, the research aims to reveal the changes that occur in their religious and spiritual experiences, a sub-dimension of post-traumatic growth for individuals. Five themes emerged from analyzing the interviews performed with 15 individuals with spinal cord injuries: strategies for coping with trauma, changes in attitudes towards God, religious practices, changes in belief in fate and an afterlife, and religious participation. Additionally, these

themes have been divided into sub-categories. Strategies for coping with trauma is sub-categorized as religious coping, exploring the meaning of life, acceptance, participating in volunteer activities at the Spinal Cord Injury Association, and social support. The theme of religious practice has been sub-categorized as performing daily worship more regularly and frequently, reading religious books, performing new religious practices, and decreasing worship. The theme of changes in belief in the hereafter and fate have been sub-categorized as forming a belief in fate and an afterlife, better understanding fate and the hereafter, and an increase in thoughts about death. The theme of religious participation has been sub-categorized as failing to attend religious services due to physical disability, receiving a religious education, and going to the mosque.

The study shows that some paraplegics benefit from religious beliefs during the process of coping, and these beliefs affect their post-traumatic growth process. Moreover, their traumatic experience has led to visible changes in participants' religious and spiritual feelings, as well as their religious practices. Most of these changes are also positive in this respect. These changes demonstrate that participants have experienced post-traumatic growth.

This research is limited in that no pilot study was done before giving the final form of the interview. Another limitation is that data were gathered only through the interview method, and the research was carried out over a limited number of participants. Moreover, we do not know how individuals with different religious beliefs and traumas cope with this process, nor do we know what kind of changes have occurred in their religious/spiritual lives at the end of the process because all research participants in this study are Muslim.

Considering the research results and limitations, the following proposals can be listed. In order to better demonstrate the effect of religious and spiritual tendencies on the post-traumatic growth process and to better understand the changes that occur in peoples religious and spiritual lives post trauma, researchers should study individuals with different traumatic experiences and in larger numbers. Furthermore, as conducting qualitative research based solely on the interview method is insufficient, carrying out a mixed research design that includes quantitative approaches could be useful. As only a small number of participants claimed to benefit from their religious beliefs in order to cope with their trauma, new research is needed to examine the role of religion in post-traumatic growth. Researchers working in this field may be able to make significant contributions to the literature by working with people who experienced different traumas. In terms of clinical practices, the ways in which psychologists and counselors take religious and spiritual resources into account and support using them for counselees to benefit from these sources could be beneficial

in terms of increasing counselees' well-being in the counseling individuals with traumatic experiences. The concept of post-traumatic growth, which is also focused on through positive psychology, can be achieved by emphasizing the positive changes that clients have undergone without ignoring it in the therapy and counseling sessions by drawing clients' attention to these changes. Religious and spiritual changes, one of the dimensions of this change, can be greater emphasized to the clients who place importance on religion in their lives. While individuals with spinal cord injuries are thought to have to come to the hospital for a long time for treating their physical disability, during this time, physical therapy, in addition to providing spiritual counseling and guidance, may be beneficial both in terms of physical and mental health. Research on the influence of people in paraplegics' surroundings on changes in these paraplegics' religion and spirituality posttrauma can guide consultants who work in this field.

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## APPENDIX 1

1. Introduction:
  - a. Age
  - b. Gender
  - c. Education status
  - d. Job
2. How long has it been since you were first paralyzed?
3. How did you cope with the pain that you experienced? How did you struggle with it? What are the things that help you to cope with?
4. What kind of changes do you have in your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about God after your trauma?
5. What kind of changes have you experienced in your everyday spiritual experiences following your trauma (your worship, daily religious practices, etc.)?
6. What kind of changes have you experienced in your belief in the hereafter and fate following your trauma (e.g., acceptance, thinking or not thinking about the afterlife, increase or decrease in thinking about these kinds of matters)?
7. What kind of changes has happened to your activities such as going to the mosque or participating in religious organizations following your traumatic experience?





