



Original Article

A Review of the Relationship Between Individual Psychology and Spirituality

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Abstract

Individual psychology is a theory developed by Alfred Adler that significantly contributed to the psychology literature both in theory and practice. Spirituality, on the other hand, is an area that cannot be ignored in human life. This article reviews the perspective of individual psychology on spirituality, its relationship with spirituality, how it makes spiritual assessments, and how it can be used with clients with a spiritual/religious orientation. The review considers both Adler's own texts and articles by later researchers who adopted his theoretical orientation. Individual psychology evaluates each individual by considering their own phenomenological field. It therefore does not ignore clients' spiritual/religious dimensions in the counseling process and accepts that spirituality has an important place in the life of individuals. Given that spirituality has a structure that supports well-being, hope, and insight while providing an important coping mechanism, Adler's inclusion of spirituality in his theory is clearly important. The case examples included in the article also support this and reveal in general terms how individual psychology handles and assesses spirituality during counseling.

Keywords:

Individual Psychology • spirituality • review study

Bireysel Psikoloji'nin Maneviyatla İlişkisi Üzerine Bir Derleme Çalışması

Öz

Bireysel psikoloji, Alfred Adler tarafından geliştirilmiş ve psikoloji literatürüne hem teorik hem de pratik olarak önemli katkılar sağlamış bir teoridir. Maneviyat ise insan hayatında göz ardı edilemeyecek bir alandır. Bu makale, bireysel psikolojinin maneviye yönelik bakış açısını, maneviyle ilişkisini, manevi değerlendirmeleri nasıl yaptığını ve manevi/dini yönelimli danışanlarla nasıl kullanılabileceğini içeren bir derleme çalışmasıdır. Derleme, hem Adler'in kendi metinlerini hem de onun teorik yönelimini benimseyen daha sonraki araştırmacıların makalelerini ele almaktadır. Bireysel psikoloji, her bireyi kendi fenomenolojik alanını dikkate alarak değerlendirmektedir. Bu nedenle danışma sürecinde danışanların manevi/dini boyutlarını göz ardı etmez ve maneviyanın bireylerin hayatında önemli bir yere sahip olduğunu kabul eder. Maneviyanın önemli bir başa çıkma mekanizması sağlarken iyilik, umut ve içgörüyü destekleyen bir yapıya sahip olduğu düşünüldüğünde, Adler'in teorisine maneviyanı dahil etmesi önemli görünmektedir. Makalede yer alan vaka örnekleri de bunu desteklemekte ve bireysel psikolojinin psikolojik danışma sürecinde maneviyanı nasıl ele aldığını ve değerlendirdiğini genel hatlarıyla ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Bireysel Psikoloji • maneviyat • derleme çalışması

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The theory of Individual psychology, developed by Alfred Adler, has a significant place in the psychological counseling and psychotherapy literature. Adler, who signaled his break from Freud in 1911 with his article “The Masculine Protest”, argued that cultural rather than biological and psychological factors affected masculine behaviors seen in men and women. He argued that women behave like men because they have fewer political and social opportunities in society. Adler’s interest in social issues and related separation from Freud provide clues about his theoretical approach in that he identified with the common people and did not remain indifferent to those who were oppressed in society (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, he focused on the impact of culture and society on human behavior and developed one of the most important concepts in individual psychology, social interest (Sharf, 2011; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). The cultural sensitivity of individual psychology is indicated by its attention to the effects of society and culture on human psychology, and its holistic evaluation of people by considering their cultural characteristics. Since spirituality is part of every client’s subjective life and cultural structure, it was not ignored in individual psychology. Indeed, later Adlerian researchers suggested that spirituality is a life task (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967).

This article discusses theoretical perspective of individual psychology by focusing on spirituality. It presents the individual psychology’s perspective on human nature, its basic concepts, how it advances the counseling/therapy process, the process of spiritual assessment, and case examples. Adler covered spirituality in his texts, albeit implicitly, while later researchers have discussed spirituality in terms of individual psychology. This has enabled the theory to make a significant contribution to the literature on the relationship between spirituality and psychology.

Individual Psychology’s View of Human Nature

Individual psychology deals with the conscious aspects of human behavior and assumes that every individual tries to be the best they can and maintain integrity in their life (Gladding, 2022). However, each individual implements this tendency in a unique way. Given that each individual adopts a unique attitude towards life, their behavior should be evaluated holistically within the framework of this attitude towards life (Adler, 2012). Individual Psychology therefore adopts a phenomenological and idiographic approach that deals with the psychology of the single, unique, whole individual (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). Another important aspect of individual psychology’s view of human nature is that it does not see people as inherently good or bad, but adopts a neutral attitude. According to Adler, people are born with a potential that includes both good and bad. It is our choices that make use good or bad (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

Basic Concepts

Before considering how individual psychology relates to spirituality, it is important to present the following basic concepts from the theory: the whole person, striving toward a goal, inferiority and superiority complex, social interest, lifestyle, life tasks, and birth order.

The Whole Person

The quickest way to understand individual psychology is to examine the Latin origin (individuus) of the word “individual”. Individuus means “indivisible” (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.) and individual psychology does not divide the individual into various parts. Rather, it considers individuals as wholes with their particular thoughts, feelings, values, attitudes, behaviors, and conscious and unconscious minds. This perspective, which is called holism and differs from Freud’s reductionist approach, is one of the most basic concepts in Adler’s theory (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

The concept of the whole person gains more meaning when considered together with the concept of striving toward a goal. Every individual has a final goal that they want to reach in life, and their behaviors are not independent of this goal. This final goal or ideal is an important driving force throughout a person’s life. The differences in each individual’s ultimate purposes reveals their individuality. Individuals also exhibit quite consistent and stable behaviors within themselves. All psychological processes, both conscious and unconscious, are more meaningful when looked at holistically (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Regarding spirituality specifically, by providing a purpose in life (Delgado, 2005; Greenway, 2006; Young et al., 1998;), it can affect the individual’s personality and exert a holistic power over their psychological processes.

Striving Towards a Goal

Individual psychology’s view of human nature and striving towards a goal, already mentioned in relation to personality integrity, stems from the idea that people are active beings who shape themselves and their environment. They are not passive in the face of their biological structure and environmental factors but live purposeful lives based on their individual choices and goals. Everything that a person does, including their daily behavior, is developed for this purpose (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004) because every action belongs within a framework, which is that person’s life purpose, determined in early childhood. That is, people lead lives in line with the goals determined during childhood (Adler, 2012).

Religion and spirituality are important in individual psychology because they bring purpose to human life (Delgado, 2005; Young et al., 1998). Every religion

tries to convey its believers to an ultimate goal, such as God, Nirvana, or eternal salvation. In particular, belief in God is an important area that individual psychology addresses regarding an individual's life goals. This is because, for the believer, God is the embodiment of the ultimate purpose and perfection in life (Johansen, 2005).

The way that religious beliefs give a sense of purpose to an individual's life can be exemplified by the following case. A woman in her twenties complains that she is not assertive and cannot say no to people. She also cannot feel that she is loved and valued. She is constantly trying to please others and work hard. Evaluated in terms of Adlerian psychology, these behaviors do not reflect a childhood trauma or an effort to fill a gap; rather, her behavior reflects her aim to be good in the eyes of God and attain religious salvation. In the words of the client, life is all about being good and she can feel her devotion to God thanks to these behaviors (Johansen, 2005).

Inferiority and Superiority Complex

Adler suggested that one of the most basic motives of human beings is the innate and inherent striving for superiority (Adler, 2001; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). Superiority means one's advancement from a perceived low position to a perceived higher position; it is not an advantage gained over someone else (Adler, 2009). The so-called complexes refer to an extreme sense of inferiority or superiority. However, these two feelings complement each other. Individuals strive for superiority and success when they feel something is lacking; they use the feeling of superiority while striving towards their life purpose and coping with the feeling of inferiority. Consequently, the striving for superiority never ends as it provides support in reaching one's ideal. The feeling of inferiority acquires a pathological quality when the person catches is trapped by his feeling to such a degree that they cannot develop and become depressed. In such cases, the superiority complex is thought to be a way of getting rid of the inferiority complex (Adler, 2001).

Social Interest

One of the most important contributions of Individual psychology is social interest. According to Adler, the individual is born in an interpersonal context and personality is shaped by interpersonal factors. Social interest is essentially a sense of community turned into action. The aim of Adlerian psychotherapy is to develop this sense of social responsibility on the assumption that empathy and altruism will increase when the sense of social responsibility increases (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

Social interest is one of the most important reasons for individual psychology's relatively positive and optimistic attitude towards religion. This is because religions

generally have the power to increase social interest by holding people socially responsible for each other. In fact, according to Adler, the main purpose of religions is to provide social cooperation (Johansen, 2005). Similarly, Polanski (2002) argues that Christianity and Buddhism have some relations with Adlerian theory, based on Adler's views, and that these relations are mostly because these belief systems prioritize sociality and give importance to the individual's development. When considered independently of religions, the relationship of spirituality with virtues like altruism and empathy supports Adler's positive view of spirituality (Giardano et al., 2014; Huber & MacDonald, 2011).

From his examination of social interest in Islam, Alizadeh (2012) concludes that Islam includes the same components as Adlerian social interest, such as sense of community, equality, unity, and spirituality. For example, the thirteenth verse of Surah Hucurat says, "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware" (Quran, 49:13). Various hadiths mention the value of being a community. For example, one hadith says, "He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while his neighbor goes hungry" (Ibn Abu Shayba, Musannaf, *îmân ve rû'yâ*: 6), highlighting the importance of one's relationship with one's society. Regarding equality, Islam advocates both individual and ethnic equality, as in the following hadith: "People are as equal as the teeth of a comb" (Kudai, *Müsnedü'ş-şihâb*, I:145). Some of the characteristics by which Islam defines true believers are also similar to some of the behaviors Adler suggested to increase social interest, as exemplified in the following verses:

- i. "Cooperate with one another in goodness and righteousness." (Qur'an, 5:2)
- ii. "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah and do not be divided." (Qur'an, 3:103)
- iii. "And be mindful of Allah—in Whose Name you appeal to one another—and honor family ties." (Qur'an, 4:1)
- iv. "O believers! Do not let some men ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let some women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the 'true' wrongdoers." (Qur'an, 49:11)

Johansen (2005) similarly argues that the principles of individual psychology are appropriate for working with Muslim clients. One of the most important reasons is that Islam gives importance to social peace, social responsibility, family, and close relationships.

Life Style

Life style, a subjective cognitive map of how the world works (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004), determines how the individual adapts to life events, solves the problems they encounter, and copes with the feeling of inferiority (Sharf, 2011). Lifestyle, which can also be defined as self, individuality, and a way of facing problems, is very important for understanding the individual as it influences their feelings, thoughts, instincts, impulses, behaviors, and attitudes. In short, it affects all parts of an individual's life, which is also related to individual psychology's holistic treatment of individuals (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

To understand a person's lifestyle, which is formed in the first years of life, it is important to look at what that person is doing with their life tasks. For example, someone who chose to be a doctor in adulthood may have faced death in their early years, lost a family member, or somehow been seriously affected by death. Thus, they may have become a doctor to protect themselves and others against death. However, an individual's lifestyle becomes most evident when they encounter a challenge. In particular, a person's reaction to difficulties encountered in a new life event can shed light on their life style (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Birth Order

Every child grows up in a unique atmosphere, even if they are born in the same family. One of the most important reasons for this, according to Adler, is birth order. Being an only child initially, the eldest sibling attracts attention and becomes the focus of the family. The arrival of the second child threatens the first child's throne, which may lead to a lifelong desire to rebel due to losing this power. Meanwhile, the second-born child is always aware that there is someone ahead of them, which makes them competitive. The last-born child is aware of their power because they usually play a leading role in the family. Thus, the children's family position due to their birth order plays an important role in forming their life styles and provides useful information to better understand the individual based on their early memories (Adler, 2001).

Life Tasks

Adler talked about three life tasks that each individual has to complete: love, work, and social relations. These tasks constitute the reality of humans, so individuals reveal their what they understand from life through the ways they complete these tasks. Individual psychology therefore evaluates people who face difficulties in their life by in terms of these three basic tasks. However, success in each task is closely related to success in the other two, so tasks cannot be considered independently of each other (Adler, 2012).

Work: The best way to fulfill this task, according to Adler, is for the individual to act with a sense of community and cooperation. Thanks to the division of labor and cooperation, many skills can be combined to contribute greatly to the well-being of humanity. Hence, it is important to monitor and guide children from the first years of their lives for their vocational education according to their interests and abilities (Adler, 2012). The main purpose of an individual in having a job or a profession is to contribute to humanity, and add value to society and other people in line with their own interests and abilities. This will enable the individual to experience both the pleasure of producing and giving something of themselves to other people. A shoemaker, for example, positions themselves as benefitting other people in the society while maintaining their own life and their family's. In short, if everyone in the society has a job to contribute to others within the limits of their interests and abilities and to sustain their own life, then this will form a solid ground for the welfare of both individuals and the society (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Love: The way for people to survive is love between the two sexes, resulting in marriage. Marriage results from the physical attraction, friendship, and desire of the two parties for each other. Because it requires both parties to think about the other rather than themselves and to be self-sacrificing, marriage is a life task that is too important to be considered only as satisfying the sexual drive. Rather, love between two people contributes to the well-being of all humanity (Adler, 2012).

Social relations: One of the most important reasons for humanity's progress and development is the human instinct to establish relations and share with other people. Being a family and belonging to a tribe are frequently encountered in human history. For the well-being of humanity, it is necessary to fight against tendencies like selfishness and the pursuit of personal superiority (Adler, 2012).

In addition to these three life tasks that Adler explicitly discussed in his works, two researchers who worked closely with Adler suggest two more life tasks (Dreikurs & Mosak, 1967; Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967), which they claim Adler implied. The first is the self, which can also be called the relationship of the person with themselves while the other is spirituality.

Fourth life task – the self: According to Dreikurs and Mosak (1967), success or failure in life is related to living in peace with oneself and others. Lack of social interest or sense of belonging and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy prevent people from accepting themselves as they are. Rather than judging themselves and believing that their good and bad sides conflict, people benefit from considering themselves as a whole, comprised of their physical and mental abilities, logic and emotions, and what they know and not know.

Fifth life task – spirituality: According to Mosak and Dreikurs (1967), Adler implicitly addressed spirituality in many places. This life task can be described as spiritual, existential, search for meaning, ontological, metaphysical, and metapsychological. In this study, the “spirituality” is the preferred term.

Psychologists avoided the subject of spirituality for many years as they considered it to be the concern of philosophy or theology. However, existential tasks are perhaps the most important that people have to complete. Considering that faith-related issues arise during counseling, it would be wrong to ignore this life task. Indeed, existential movements in the history of psychology show that psychotherapists are also interested in metaphysical and philosophical issues (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967). Although handling spiritual issues in counseling requires detailed discussion, it is worth emphasizing at this point that the counselor should understand and accept their own spiritual and religious beliefs, and do so based on the school of therapy they follow (Polanski, 2002). For example, Polanski (2002) tried to understand his own religious and spiritual beliefs within the framework of individual psychology theory.

Linden (2020) suggests that, considered as a life task along with the self, spirituality is deeper than Adler’s three tasks associated with daily life. This is because spirituality is less connected with daily life than work, love, and social relationships. Although spirituality is compatible with them, its structure goes beyond them and it appears as an existential issue.

The spiritual or existential life task can be considered in more detail in terms of relationship with God, relationship with religion, humanity’s place in the universe, and the meaning of life and death – immortality (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967).

Relationship with God: This task essentially involves the individual making a choice to believe or not believe in God. At first sight, this decision may be thought of as entirely related to religion and not linked to psychology. However, the individual’s belief in God, or rather what kind of God to believe in, is closely related to that individual’s psychology. For example, do they see God as a constant punisher or do they have a more compassionate vision of God? What is their relationship with God? Do they believe that praying once a week will suffice or should they worship constantly? Do they believe that they should proselytize? If they believe they should proselytize, this is closely related to the task of social interest, so explaining God to people will be an important endeavor. If they do not believe in God, do they feel the need to share their atheistic point of view with others? If they are agnostic, what does this mean for them? Are they ignoring their spirituality or revealing a problem with their life task?

All these questions can be evaluated within this Adlerian life task and included within individual psychology. Indeed, individual psychology has long been asking and

answering these questions. For example, several studies have demonstrated relationship between mental health and various aspects of spirituality like God attachment style and conception of God (Kimball et al., 2013; Koohsar & Bonab, 2011; Leman et al., 2018; Pirutinsky et al., 2019; Siltan et al., 2014; Tung et al., 2018).

Relationship with religion: This involves addressing the following questions (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967): Does the individual belong to a religion? Do they accept a religion? Are they rebelling against religion? Do they have a religious identity? If so, are they ashamed of it? Do they have a history of religious conversion? What do they understand by religion? If they are not religious, are they oriented towards other beliefs like Marxism or an atheism?

In addition to these questions, how religion manifests in one's life is also important, such as attending church regularly and worshiping (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967). Studies have shown that mental health is affected by a person's religion, spirituality-based behaviors, and participation in religious and spiritual-based activities (Abu-Rayya & Abu-Rayya, 2009; Davis & Kiang, 2016; Horozcu, 2010; Hintikka et al., 2000; Kasapoğlu, 2022; Keyes & Reitzes, 2007; Strawbridge et al., 2001). Completing this life task also relates to the purpose of religion. Is it to get closer to God? Is it to worship God? Is it do good to others? Is it to achieve self-transcendence? It seems important to find answers to these questions to understand each individual's psychology (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967).

The place of man in the universe: How should the individual relate to the rest of the world and the universe? Is human nature good or bad? What kind of being is a human? Each person may have different answers to these questions, which in turn affects how they regulate their relationships with themselves, with God, with other people, and with the universe. For example, the self-perception and human relationship of a person who thinks that people are inherently sinful and bad will be different from someone who does not (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967).

The meaning of life and death – immortality: One of the questions that every person must find answers to concerns death, including whether to believe in life after death and the nature of the soul. Another important question concerns how one tries to achieve immortality. For example, some people believe they can achieve immortality by having children and transferring their values to them across the generations (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967).

Meaning of Life: In his book *What Life Should Mean to You*, Adler claims that one cannot live without finding a meaning in life. Furthermore, this meaning is unique to the individual, so no one can say that the meaning they find in someone else's life is wrong. Although people may not be able to answer when asked about the meaning

they ascribe to life, they reveal it through their actions because the meaning that a person finds in life is an important factor directing their behavior (Adler, 2012).

According to Mosak and Dreikurs (1967), every person must find answers to the following questions: Does life have a meaning? Does it have a meaning in itself or do we give it a meaning? The process of finding or creating the meaning of life of an individual gives important information about that person. For example, most people find meaning through the pain they experience in life while others find it more hedonistically to the extent that they enjoy life. However, all the temporary pleasures taken from life may not be enough to give meaning to one's life because more permanent pleasures may be preferred to temporary pleasures, such as contributing to society or serving God (Mosak & Dreikurs, 1967). Studies have demonstrated the positive effects on physical and psychological health of finding meaning in life (Kim et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Reker et al., 1987).

Psychological Counseling Process

Goals of the Psychological Counseling Process

Individual psychology-based counseling has the following four main aims (Gladding, 2022):

- i. Increasing social interest
- ii. Developing a more functional lifestyle
- iii. Changing thoughts and behaviors that interfere with the client's well-being
- iv. Enabling the client to achieve self-understanding

Counselor-Client Relationship

Individual psychology-based psychological counseling prioritizes the client-counselor relationship throughout the process. The counselor should display a friendly, supportive attitude, adopt an encouraging approach to increase the client's self-belief, and try to encourage the client's self-insights so that they can find their lifestyle. While clients should experience a soothing, comforting, and restorative relationship with the counselor, interventions aimed at changing the lifestyle patterns may be threatening. Therefore, it is important for the counselor to monitor the dynamics of the relationship with the client throughout the process (Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

Stages of Psychological Counseling

Establishing the therapeutic relationship

As in many psychological counseling schools, the first step in Adlerian counseling is establishing a therapeutic relationship between client and counselor. Indeed, Adler's first rule of counseling was to "win" the client. In Adlerian counseling, the client and the counselor have equal status while the counselor adopts a friendly teacher attitude and tries to conduct the process in cooperation with the client whereby the client is as active as the counselor (Oberst & Stewart, 2003; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). Ways of making the client active and responsible include deciding the frequency, day, and time of sessions together with the client, and charging the client directly for the session (Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

One of the most important parts of the therapeutic relationship is setting common counseling goals. A few common goals may be set in the first meeting but these are temporary and may change in subsequent sessions. This is because the client may be reluctant or not yet ready to talk about their dysfunctional lifestyle in early sessions, so it is appropriate to only set the related goals after the client has become ready. The counselor can ask the following types of questions to determine the counseling objectives: "What brought you here today?" "What kind of person would you like to be in six months?" "How will we know that our sessions are about to be completed?" The final question reveals the criteria for ending the counseling process (Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

Lifestyle analysis

The client's personality is shaped by their problems in daily life while past difficulties determine their lifestyle. (Oberst & Stewart, 2003). Adlerian therapy proposes various strategies to determine the client's lifestyle, including the family constellation interview, asking questions, identifying first memories, dream interpretation, and identifying basic mistakes (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

Family Constellation Interview: The client is asked to describe each family member and their relationships with each other (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). Detailed information that can be gained from this interview includes the client's birth order, memories of their relations with siblings, and any groupings within the family. The interview can also discuss topics like the family's values and the parents' interaction with their children and each other. These could address the following questions (Sharf, 2011): How did the parents together and separately discipline their children? Did the relationship between the parents change periodically? If so, at what stages did this take place? If the parents divorced, what kind of family arrangements did they make during the transition?

Asking Questions: To understand the purpose of the client's symptoms, the client is asked questions like the following: "How would your life be different if you were well?" "What would you be doing if you did not have these problems?" These questions are valuable as they can reveal the client's secondary gains (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

First Memories: One of the important techniques is identifying which of client's earliest memories are still active in their life and still affect their lifestyle and goals. A client's first memories usually appear before the age of 8 or 9 years and concern a clear specific event. These memories can explain what obstacles a person has overcome and why they are more interested in certain aspects of life (Adler, 2001). According to Adler, there is no such thing as an "accidental memory" because every memory creates the client's life story (Adler, 2012).

While examining these memories, the counselor asks the client direct, clear, and precise questions (Sharf, 2011), such as "What is the earliest memory you can remember?" While evaluating these memories, the counselor should try to answer questions like the following to determine the memory's content and quality (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). Is the client active or passive in this memory? What emotion do they have? Are they a receiver or a giver? Do they see themselves as being in a superior or inferior position? What kind of patterns does the memory have? Who else is in these memories? Which part of the recalled event does the client highlight?

Dream Interpretation: Because individual psychology sees the human being as a whole with their conscious and unconscious aspects, dreams cannot be considered apart from the person's individual integrity and lifestyle (Adler, 2001). According to Adler, dreams are an effort to solve current life problems, so there is a connection between dreamer and dream; they are not independent of each other and each dream is unique and purposeful for that client, just like any other behavior. The counselor therefore needs to determine how this dream functions in the client's life (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). Dreams can also reflect a client's wishes and fears for the future (Sharf, 2011), for example by rehearsing their possible behavior.

Identifying Basic Mistakes: Towards the end of the evaluation stage, the counselor can identify the client's basic mistakes. These are self-defeating features of the client's lifestyle that generally reflect behaviors like avoidance of others or lack of interest in others or oneself. These in turn prevent the client from developing social interest (Sharf, 2011). Although the client may have started the counseling process because of one basic mistake, they may have other related mistakes. During the counseling process, the counselor makes the client aware of these basic mistakes and strives to develop an understanding so that the client can avoid them in future. However, basic mistakes are very difficult to change (as cited in Sharf, 2011).

Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2004) identify the following five basic mistakes:

- i. Overgeneralization (e.g., “The world is not fair.”)
- ii. Impossible goals (e.g., “Others should always meet my needs.”)
- iii. Misunderstanding life (e.g., “All the world is against me.”)
- iv. Denying one’s self-value (e.g., “Nobody could love me.”)
- v. Mistaken values (e.g., “I should always win although it damages others.”)

Overholser (2022) said that Adler was one of the pioneers of cognitive restructuring because he recognized that neurosis stems from one’s beliefs and attitudes. Reflecting his earlier profession as an ophthalmologist, Adler suggested that everyone looks at the world through their own glasses – that is, in terms of their own lifestyle. Perceptions and interpretations determine how we see life. Hence, individual psychology considers basic mistakes as the precursors of cognitive errors.

Interpretation and insight

Insight is central to Adlerian therapy. The client gains insight by recognizing their maladaptive and dysfunctional lifestyle patterns through the counselor’s interpretations. However, simply gaining insight is not enough because insight entails action. It is therefore important that the client acts on the insights gained during the process (Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

Reorientation

At this stage, the client’s learning process is supported by various techniques related to doing different things and taking action to enable a different, more satisfying life. Indeed, counseling is a process of re-learning, as reflected in the following techniques used at this stage:

- i. Future autobiography
- ii. Creating new images
- iii. Acting “as if”
- iv. The push-button technique
- v. Spitting the client’s soup
- vi. Catching oneself

vii. Goal setting and indirect suggestion

viii. Paradoxical strategies

ix. Suggestions and guidelines

Individual Psychology Based Spiritual Assessment

Craig (2006) developed an activity for assessing the spirituality of adult and adolescent clients within the framework of Adlerian counseling. The activity aims to reveal how early memories affect the client's views on spirituality and improve the counselor's understanding of the client's spirituality. According to Craig (2006), this activity is especially beneficial for clients experiencing an important transition period, such as loss, divorce, or career change. The activity has the following broad purposes:

- i. Reveal the spiritual dimensions of the issues that the client has brought to the counseling process
- ii. Understand the causes underlying the client's perspective towards spirituality
- iii. Make the client aware how spirituality affects their perspective towards themselves, other people, and the world by understanding their causes and confronting the client with these
- iv. Show that the client can use spirituality as an alternative resource in challenging times.

Before performing a spiritual assessment of the client, the Adlerian counselor should consider the following four important issues:

- i. The counselor should first talk to the client about their perspective on spirituality and try to understand the client's general opinion.
- ii. The counselor should develop an understanding of how early memories have shaped the client's perspective on spirituality, particularly how these spiritual beliefs and values were formed by observations and subjective interpretations during early childhood. Consequently, the client's interpretations may be far from reality, thereby constituting basic mistakes in terms of individual psychology.
- iii. Early memories help the client gain insight by providing important information about their personality and lifestyle. However, such insight is not enough for change in itself but needs to cause behavior change.
- iv. The counselor should only conduct a spiritual assessment once a good counselor-client relationship has been established.

Based on these four points, spiritual assessment of a client include the following three steps:

- i. The counselor informs the client that they can use their spiritual views as a resource, especially during transitions in life (job change, marriage, etc.).
- ii. The counselor retrieves the client's early memories of spirituality.
- iii. These early memories are first interpreted by the client before the counselor adds their own comments.

That is, the counselor cooperates with the client to jointly seek answers to the following five questions.

- i. How has the client's current spiritual perspective been influenced by their early views?
- ii. How can the client use spirituality in their current life transitions?
- iii. If the client were to change one of their current views on spirituality, which would it be?
- iv. How does spirituality affect the client's ability to cope with difficulties in their life?
- v. How does the client's current ideas about spirituality differ from or resemble those of their parents?

Case Example of Spiritual Assessment

Craig (2006) offers the following case of Adlerian counseling-oriented spiritual assessment. The client is a 16-year-old girl who applied to a psychological counselor on the advice of her grandmother because of the losses she had experienced. More specifically, she was abandoned by her father, her mother abused substances, and her grandfather died. She then isolated herself from her friends, began to have sleep problems, and lost her appetite.

After the counselor and client established a good therapeutic relationship, the client started to give information about her family and her own personality. This revealed that she sees the world as unpredictable, which is normal considering the sudden losses she had experienced.

The counselor also wanted to discuss spirituality with the client and thought that going through the church would be less threatening. He therefore asked about the client's experience with the church. She stated that she regularly went to church at her grandmother's insistence. The counselor tried to understand why the client listened

to her grandmother's advice by stating that most of her peers would easily say if there was something they did not want to do. Thereupon, the client said that her grandmother left her alone when she went to church, and that she had some friends who went to church. At this point, the counselor highlighted that going to church gave her the opportunity to be with friends. The purpose here was to convey to the client the idea that spirituality can be a helpful resource for her. However, while doing this, he did not refer to spirituality directly, but used a religious element introduced by the client herself, namely the church.

In the second stage, the counselor focused more on the idea that spirituality can be a helpful resource in coping with difficulties in life by collaborating with the client. He therefore asked the client whether going to church would help her solve her problems and whether she went to church to find answers to some of her questions. The client then gave an example of her difficult childhood. The counselor, confirming that finding meaning in her childhood difficulties could be a good example, asked if she could use the church and spirituality as a tool to deal with the difficulties she experienced.

In the third stage, the counselor asked if the client wanted to describe her first memory of the church, spirituality, or religion. If she was willing and could remember, he asked her to describe it in detail. The client recounted the following memory: "It was before my mother went to prison; I was 5-6 years old. I was at the funeral of a relative, everyone was crying. I did not feel any emotion like sadness, maybe I just felt a little left out. I did not know what to do, I was numb." The counselor commented about how the client did not feel that she belonged there and then asked what specifically caught her attention now about this memory. The client drew attention to the feeling of emptiness she felt in her stomach. The counselor asked how important this feeling was to her, and the client noted that it was interesting to remember this feeling from ten years ago. The counselor then commented that she was caught off guard by these feelings and added: "You are left out right now. You do not know what to do and you do not know how to adapt from now on." Thus, the counselor also tried to make sense of the client's problems by using her first memory. In this way, he helped her gain insight.

The following three conclusions can be drawn from this case:

- i. Counselors should integrate spirituality into counseling by taking into account the client's own understanding of spirituality and staying true to their phenomenological domains.
- ii. The counselor's assessment of how the client's perceptions and understanding of spirituality are reflected in other areas of their lives, such as self-perceptions and human relations, may contribute to the process.

- iii. Counselors should avoid transmitting their own values to the client, although they can integrate it into the process when clients themselves talk about spirituality.

Spiritual Assessment Based on Individual Psychology for Pre-Marital Couples

Another area where spiritual assessment can draw on the Adlerian counseling perspective is pre-marital counseling. The Adlerian counselor takes into account the unique lifestyle of the client during the assessment process. If religion/spirituality is important for the client in their life, it is taken into consideration in Adlerian counseling (Duba Sauerheber & Bitter, 2013). The technique includes the following four stages:

Forming the relationship with the pre-marital religious couple

At this stage, the counselor establishes a therapeutic relationship with the couple and gets information about the meaning of religion and belief for them, the role of religion in their marriage, the important aspects of their religious beliefs and practices, and the effect of religion on their choice of each other.

Relationship assessment

At this stage, an assessment is made regarding the compatibility of the partners' lifestyles. This involves discussing their families, the effects on their current lives of religious and spiritual messages they received during their childhoods, and the effects of religion on their social interest.

Insight and shared meaning

At this stage, the counselor aims for the couple to get to know each other better and realize how their religious life and religious teachings could threaten their marriage. The counselor also tries to understand how open the couple is to change. Thus, the couple is expected to gain insights into each other's religious life and the possible effects of their individual lives on their marriage.

Reorientation to the marriage

At this stage, the couple makes an action plan that includes themes, such as how they will build their future lives together, how they will treat each other when they see each other's weaknesses, and which religious texts will guide them in their marriage.

Case Examples

This section discusses two individual psychology-oriented cases with clients with a spiritual/religious orientation. The examples are adapted from Johansen (2009).

Case Example 1

The client is a 24-year-old male who went to the United States from Turkey to study for his master's degree in economics. He applied for psychotherapy due to recent intense anxiety and constant negative thoughts when interacting with other people. The client thinks that people are constantly criticizing him, which makes him tense all the time. Although the client describes himself as a devout Muslim, he has not been to the mosque for a long time and cannot be sure whether he will be accepted if he goes.

The counselor obtained the following information about the client. He is the middle child of three in a family that prioritizes education. He describes himself as religious, but admits to experiencing difficulties in fulfilling his religious duties since arriving in the USA and behaving in ways that contradict his values. The counselor started by getting this information and informing the client about the counseling and the role of the counselor. Throughout the process, the counselor emphasized that the client is an expert on his own religion and life, which helped the client become more open to discussing his religious belief.

In the first sessions, the counselor assessed the client's lifestyle. From the client's earliest memories, the counselor deduced that he wants to be a good person, attaches importance to other people's opinions about him, tries to do what is expected of him, and obeys the rules. He sees other people as more knowledgeable, critical, and demanding than himself. In short, his lifestyle is more other-oriented. Accordingly, once he arrived in the USA, he started to drink alcohol and neglected his own religion to adapt to American culture and the people, which made him feel guilty. The reason for his anxiety is that he is afraid that Allah will punish him and that his father will realize what he has done. Because of these concerns and thoughts, he violated his own standards and distanced himself from people, thinking that they would not accept him. Likewise, he distanced himself from Allah because he thought that he would not forgive him.

The counselor tried to show the client how his other-oriented lifestyle was affecting his feelings and emotions, and to make him realize that he is responsible for his own feelings and has the power to change them. The client showed the reasons for his behavior, which he saw as sins, and for which he felt guilty, through his lifestyle analysis. The client was contradicting his values to adapt to the country, but this does not make him happy. Rather, the behaviors that he hopes will make him good make him feel worse. During the counseling, the client faced these and began to seek ways to reconnect with God by noticing the reasons for his behavior and feelings, and taking into account the possibility of forgiveness.

Thus, the counselor's conversation with the client on spiritual and religious issues occurred after the client himself brought these issues to the session and indicated

their importance in his life. From the perspective of individual psychology, religion is an important factor determining the client's life style. Consequently, conducting counseling without addressing this area would not be effective.

Case Example 2

The other case example concerns a 29-year-old male client who has been showing depressive symptoms since adolescence. These have increased in the last year after he lost his job as a result of his mistakes and customer complaints. He decided to seek psychological counseling on the advice of his roommate, but thinks that he cannot get rid of his depression, which he believes depression will not leave him until the end of his life.

The client worked for an insurance company for four years until being dismissed recently. He liked his friends at work but did not socialize with them outside of work. He especially avoids his male friends because he thinks they were much more critical than his female friends, with whom he feels more comfortable. His romantic relationships, which he often finds difficult, are generally ended by the other party, and he does not know why. Although he does not describe himself as a very religious person, he believes in God. However, he thinks that there is no need to go to church to see him. He finds Buddhists less judgmental than Christians. The client was diagnosed with major depression due to depressive symptoms, weight gain, sleep problems, chronic fatigue, and feeling guilty. He also shows some dependent personality traits, such as a fear of being alone and constantly wanting someone to pay attention to him.

He gave the following information about his family. He is the youngest of two children in a rich family. His father is a businessman while his mother is a doctor. When his older sister left home to specialize in medicine, he felt bad. Then, when he was sixteen, his parents unexpectedly divorced and he realized for the first time that his parents did not love each other very much. He believes that women's role in the family is looking pretty, being nice, and doing what's right whereas men are supposed to do whatever is right and prevent things from going wrong. The client experienced some difficulties during his transition to adulthood due to the events mentioned earlier. He felt worried about a life that he was not ready for.

After eliciting the client's first memories, the counselor came to the following conclusions. The client sees himself as a bad and inadequate person. If something goes wrong in his life, it is because of him. Moreover, he thinks that people will realize how inadequate he is once they really know him. Therefore, he tries to act in such a way that others do not see his inadequacy. He always tries to act the way people want because he wants to be known as someone who is loved and seen enough.

The counselor's formulation of the case was as follows. The client, despite feeling inadequate, was able to graduate from university, get a job, and achieve professional success. His dismissal from his most recent job almost "supported" his feelings of inadequacy and not being loved by other. After losing his job, he lost all hope of success. Most importantly, although he complains of depression, he does not actually want to get rid of it because it provides an excuse for his failures. However, he feels himself punished by God, which prevents him from socializing, when it is actually just an excuse.

Initially, the client's complained that counseling would not be effective while the counselor tried to establish a therapeutic relationship. The process, which continued with conversations about trying to get along with his roommate, evolved into the process of getting to know himself and returning to God. The client recalled that his connection with God had helped him with his college life, his relationship with his parents, and when he thought his sister had abandoned him. This enabled the counselor to integrate religious and spiritual issues into the counseling process, particularly regarding the following topics.

The client stated that he had distanced himself from God and religion, which made him very sinful, so he thought that God would not forgive him. The counselor challenged and tried to change these irrational beliefs. For example, he asked following questions: "What makes you so unfortunate that prevents God from forgiving you? There are people who are more sinful than you." These questions aimed to reveal the client's secondary gains from thinking that God would not forgive him. It turned out that these thoughts made him feel depressed, which prevented him from returning to work and "risking" failure.

The turning point in the counseling process was when the client realized that he wanted to be sure that he would not be abandoned by anyone again, that everyone would respect him and accept him as he is, and that he acted in line with this purpose. At this point, the counselor told the client that although God is perfect and most deserving of respect, he is not respected by everyone. This made the client question how realistic it is for him to expect everyone to accept and respect him.

At the point of behavior change, the client decided to talk about forgiveness with a priest. He also intended to go to a Buddhist temple, meditate, and help people. Finally, he looked for a job and started a business. Despite some unsuccessful attempts and eventually found that he was successful in his job, which made him feel that God loves him no matter what, from which he developed a renewed sense of faith.

The following inferences can be made from this case regarding the inclusion of religion and spirituality in the individual psychology-based counseling. Psychology and religious/spiritual issues interact and cannot be separated from each other in

this particular case. A client's psychological state is affected by their misperceptions and irrational beliefs regarding God, being a sinner, and being forgiven for sin. It is important to assess religious/spiritual issues during counseling and make appropriate interventions. Each client's religious beliefs are unique. For example, in this case, the client had traces of both Christian and Buddhist beliefs, which he had combined into a unique belief system. Adlerian therapy has also shown how clients are oriented to community service through religious and spiritual beliefs, participation in religious communities, and increased social interest. Most importantly, in this case the client's beliefs about religious/spiritual issues were very much in line with his lifestyle. That is, the client, who believed that he would not be forgiven or accepted by God, also believed that people would not accept him.

Conclusion

Individual psychology's understanding of counseling is sensitive to the client's subjective and phenomenological field. This is exemplified by the effort of each individual to understand their own life style and the counselor's evaluation of the client as a whole, including their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and all their life. As the case examples described above demonstrate, spirituality and religion affect the whole life of clients with a spiritual/religious orientation and are therefore an important component in psychological assessments and interventions. Consequently, individual psychology can enable effective counseling by addressing the client's lifestyle, including spirituality and religion. The theorists who came after Adler argued that spirituality and its related components are another life task, thereby showing individual psychology's relationship with religion and spirituality. This relatively optimistic and positive attitude towards spirituality, which involves evaluating and using the client's spiritual/religious aspects in therapy sessions, may enable counselors to evaluate clients more holistically and provide more comprehensive interventions. In addition, these features can provide an example to psychological counselors who adopt different theoretical approaches of working with clients with a spiritual/religious orientation.

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