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Research Article

# The Relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Happiness: Research on Hockey Players

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness. The universe of the research consists of 7 women's clubs, 8 men's clubs and a total of 180 athletes, 84 women and 96 men, from 15 clubs, participating in the women's-men's open field 1st league competitions of the Turkish Hockey Federation 2020-2021 season. Ethics committee approval was obtained for the research. CFA was performed for the research scales. In addition to descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyzes were applied within the context of the relational model. According to the results of the correlation analysis, a significant, positive and moderate correlation was found between existential thinking, personal meaning production, awareness and conscious state expansion, which are the sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, and happiness. According to the results of the multiple regression analysis, it can be said that awareness and conscious state expansion, which are sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, have a significant positive contribution in explaining the effect of spiritual intelligence on happiness, and that the happiness of the athletes will increase with the increase in their awareness and conscious state expansion depending on their spiritual intelligence.

## Keywords:

Hockey players • happiness • spiritual intelligence

## Ruhsal Zekâ ve Mutluluk İlişkisi: Hokey Sporcuları Araştırması

### Öz

Bu araştırma ile ruhsal zekâ ve mutluluk ilişkisinin araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmanın evrenini Türkiye Hokey Federasyonu 2020-2021 sezonu kadınlar-erkekler açık alan 1. lig müsabakalarına katılan 7 kadın kulübü, 8 erkek kulübü ve toplamda 15 kulüpten 84 kadın, 96 erkek olmak üzere toplamda 180 sporcu oluşturmaktadır. Örneklem grubunu ise bu sporcular içerisinde araştırmaya tamamen gönüllülük esasına göre katılmayı kabul eden 38 kadın, 89 erkek olmak üzere toplamda 127 sporcu oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma için etik kurul onayı alınmıştır. Araştırma ölçeklerine yönelik doğrulayıcı faktör analizi (DFA) yapılmıştır. Betimsel istatistiğin yanı sıra, ilişkisel model kapsamında pearson korelasyon ve çoklu regresyon analizleri uygulanmıştır. Korelasyon analizi sonucuna göre ruhsal zekânın alt boyutlarından olan önemli varoluşsal düşünme, kişisel anlam üretimi, farkındalık ve bilinçli durum genişlemesi ile mutluluk arasında anlamlı, pozitif yönlü ve orta düzeyli bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Çoklu regresyon analizi sonucuna göre ruhsal zekânın, mutluluk üzerindeki etkisini açıklamada ruhsal zekânın alt boyutlarından olan farkındalık ve bilinçli durum genişlemesinin anlamlı bir şekilde pozitif yönde katkısı olduğundan, sporcuların ruhsal zekâlarına bağlı olarak farkındahklarının ve bilinçli durum genişlemelerinin artmasıyla mutluluklarının da artacağı söylenebilir.

## Anahtar Kelimeler:

Hokey sporcuları • mutluluk • ruhsal zekâ

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Concept of Intelligence is defined as the ability of people to think, reason, to perceive objective truths, to judge and to draw conclusions (TDK, 2019). According to Vaughan (2002), intelligence can sometimes be defined as the ability to manage cognitive complexity. Intelligence is one of the most important individual differences between people (Saheb & Kakabraee, 2019). Intelligence was stated as a cognitive ability by Alfred Bine in the early 20th century. However, in the last two decades, the concept of intelligence has been expanded to other fields such as natural intelligence, existential intelligence, and spiritual intelligence (Sahebalzamani Farahani, Abasi, & Talebi, 2013). Spiritual intelligence is the ability to ask questions about the ultimate meaning of one's life (Sawhney & Bansal, 2015). Spiritual intelligence is very important in making spiritual decisions (Vaughan, 2002).

### **The Concept of Spiritual Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence Theory**

For many years, discovering spirituality and finding the meaning of life have been accepted as fundamental phenomena in the context of human existence. Since Zohar introduced the concept of spiritual intelligence, related field researchers have made an effort to clarify this concept (Skrzypinska, 2021). Gardner, one of the pioneers of intelligence research, discussed the concept of intelligence in a multidimensional way in his book *The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner, 1987). According to Zohar and Marshall, there is increasing evidence that another type of intelligence, spiritual intelligence, exists in the 21st century. Spiritual intelligence is our most basic intelligence. Meaning is what we use to develop our capacity for vision and value. It makes us dream and strive. This type of intelligence underlies the role that our beliefs and values play in the things we believe and the actions we take (Zohar & Marshall, 2000a). Spiritual intelligence can enable us to reach the deepest layer of our true selves (Zohar & Marshall, 2000b).

If we layer intelligence in the form of a pyramid, we can put spiritual intelligence on the top layer of the pyramid (Wigglesworth, 2011). King (2008) stated that spiritual intelligence is an important element in defining the inner potential of individuals. According to Vasconcelos (2020), spiritual intelligence is a type of intelligence that people use to reach their own spirituality and develop these aspects of them. At the same time, spiritual intelligence can be seen as a human capacity that connects us to the ultimate frontier, the spiritual realm. Therefore, this type of intelligence can be developed carefully and in a disciplined manner over time by anyone who is genuinely interested in cultivating their own spirituality.

Spiritual intelligence expands one's capacity to understand others at the deepest level (Subraniam & Panchanatham 2015). It can be thought that people will be much happier when they understand each other better. According to Kangal (2013) mankind has tried to understand, define and capture happiness since its existence. Happiness is a concept that



reflects the positive emotional states of individuals (Keser, 2018). According to Fisher (2010), happiness occurs in the form of pleasant mood and emotional state, well-being and positive attitude and behavior. According to Ng (2022), happiness is subjective; but happiness is also affected by objective factors. Therefore, people can reach happiness in different ways. According to Diener and Seligman (2002), it can be said that people with a system of emotions and thoughts that can react appropriately to events are very happy. According to Lyubomirsky and King (2005), positive effects lead to success and people achieves more success when they are happy.

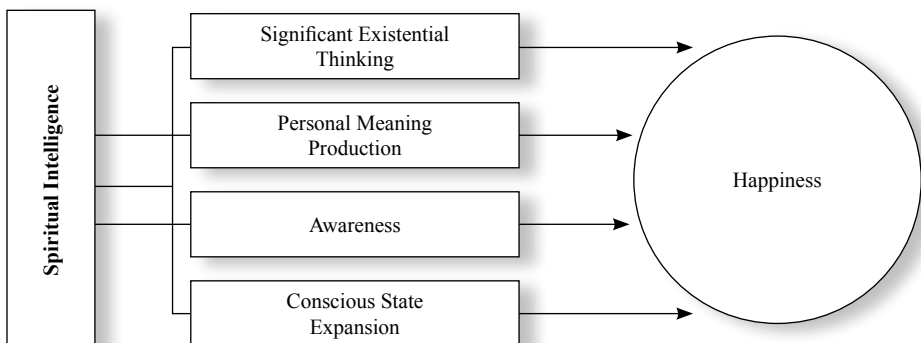
It is thought that the studies to be carried out with the participation of different sample groups in the field of spiritual intelligence are important. The reason for this thought is that every person has the ability to construct meaning and their spiritual intelligence comes into play in this process. The important thing here is the thought of whether the concepts that are interpreted make people happy. Based on this idea, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness. Therefore, it is thought that the results of this study are important because of the contributions they will make to the relevant literature.

## METHOD

### Research Model

This research was designed in line with the relational model (Karasar, 2019). Correlation research is research in which the relationship between two or more variables is examined without intervening in any way. The identification and study of human behavior in individual and social relationships is a complex process. Correlation research makes this complexity more understandable and allows it to be examined within the framework of relations at a simple level (Saruhan & Yıldız, 2017). In Figure 1 below, the conceptual model of the research and the hypotheses created are presented.

**Figure 1.**  
*Conceptual model of the research*



H<sub>1</sub>: Existential thinking, which is one of the sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, affects happiness in a positive way.

H<sub>2</sub>: The production of personal meaning, one of the sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, has a significant positive effect on happiness.

H<sub>3</sub>: Awareness, one of the sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, has a significant positive effect on happiness.

H<sub>4</sub>: Conscious state expansion, which is one of the sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, affects happiness in a positive way.

### **Study Population**

Ethics committee approval was obtained for the research from the relevant unit of Korkut Ata University with the number of E-59754796-050.99-18973, decision number of 2021/3/19. The universe of the research consists of 7 women's clubs, 8 men's clubs and a total of 180 athletes, 84 women and 96 men, from 15 clubs, participating in the women's-men's open field 1st league competitions of the Hockey Federation 2020-2021 season. The sample group consists of 127 athletes, 38 women and 89 men, who agreed to participate in the research on a completely voluntary basis.

### **Data Collection Tools**

The demographic form was used in the first part of the data collection, which includes personal information. In the second part, "The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) developed by King (2008) was used. The Turkish adaptation of the inventory was made by Seyfi (2016). Inventory: It consists of 4 sub-dimensions as "personal meaning production", "important existential thinking", "conscious state expansion" and "awareness" (Seyfi, 2016). As a result of the CFA related to the spiritual intelligence scale used in the research, the compliance criteria were examined and CMIN/DF(x)<sup>2nd</sup>/df) was found to be: 1,350, CFI: .943, GFI: .850, IFI: .945, AGFI: .803, TLI: .932, RMSEA:.053 The fact that the X<sup>2</sup> /DF value of the scale is below 3 and the RMSEA value is below 0.08 indicates that the scale used is verified with the collected data. Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values of the scale calculated in this study are: important existential thinking dimension .758; personal meaning production dimension .801; awareness dimension .876; conscious state expansion .753; and the overall scale was calculated as .931.

In the third part, the 7-item "Oxford happiness scale short form", which was developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) and adapted into Turkish by Dogan and Cotok (2011) was used to evaluate the level of happiness. As a result of the CFA regarding the happiness scale used in the research, the compliance criteria were examined and CMIN/DF(x)<sup>2nd</sup>/df) was found to be: 1,256, CFI: .986, GFI: .969, IFI: .945, AGFI:

.922, TLI: .974, RMSEA: .045 The fact that the  $X^2/DF$  value of the scale is below 3 and the RMSEA value is below 0.08 indicates that the scale used is verified with the collected data. Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value of the scale in this study was found to be .759. As a result of the CFA, it can be said that the goodness of fit values obtained for both scales used in the research are appropriate (Kline, 2011; Plichta & Kelvin, 2013; Ugurlu, 2014; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014).

## Analysis of Data

Missing values were examined, and outliers were checked. Regression, correlation and descriptive analyzes are included.

## Results

**Table 1.**  
*Demographic characteristics of Hockey Players*

		N	%
Gender	Female	38	29.9
	Male	89	70.1
Age group	14- 15 years old	30	23.6
	16- 17 years old	27	21.3
	18- 20 years old	33	26,0
	21 and older	37	29,1
Duration of being athlete	1- 3 years	66	52,0
	4- 6 years	29	22,8
	7 years and more	32	25,2
Total		127	100,0

The findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the hockey players participating in the study are presented in Table 1 above. A total of 127 hockey players, 38 female (29.9%) and 89 male (70.1%) participated in the research. Age distributions are 30 athletes aged 14-15 (23.6%), 27 athletes aged 16-17 (21.3%), 33 athletes aged 18-20 (26.0%), and 37 athletes aged 21 and above (% 29.1). Athletic life duration groups were grouped as 66 athletes for 1-3 years (52.0%), 29 athletes for 4-6 years (22.8%), and 32 athletes for 7 years and above (25.2%).

**Table 2.**  
*Mean, standard deviation and correlation values of the variables*

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Spiritual Intelligence</i>	1. Important existential thinking	3,33	,852	-				
	2. Personal Meaning Generation	3,63	,834	,567**	-			
	3. Awareness	3,46	,782	,656**	,784**	-		
	4. Conscious State Expansion	3,48	,927	,512**	,557**	,670**	-	
5. Happiness	3,42	,760	439**	,607**	,690**	,666**	-	

\*\* $p < 0,01$

If we make an evaluation according to the correlation analysis made between the four dimensions of the spiritual intelligence scale and the happiness scale; It has been determined that there is a positive and moderately significant relationship between “important existential thinking” and “happiness” ( $r=.439$ ), that there is moderately and a positive significant relationship between “personal meaning production” and “happiness” ( $r=.607$ ), that there is moderately and a positive significant relationship between “awareness” and “happiness” ( $r=.690$ ), and that there is moderately and a positive significant relationship between “conscious state expansion” and “happiness” ( $r=.666$ ). Based on these findings, it can be said that there are positive relationships between spiritual intelligence and happiness.

**Table 3.**

*Multiple regression analysis results of spiritual intelligence and happiness scales*

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t	p
(Constant)	,842	,226		3,723	,000
Significant Existential Thinking	-,076	,072	-,085	-1,060	,291
Personal Meaning Generation	,140	,088	,153	1,581	,116
Awareness	,365	,111	,375	3,279	,001
Conscious State Expansion	,306	,067	,373	4,586	,000
R=,751	R <sup>2</sup> =,563	Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =,549			
F <sub>(4-122)</sub> =39,365	p=0,00	D-W=1,894			

*Note: The dependent variable: Happiness*

Regression analysis is a statistical method used to model and examine the mathematical relationship between variables (Gamgam and Altunkaynak 2017). Table 3 shows the regression analysis between the independent variable, mental soundness, and the dependent variable, psychological well-being. Regression analysis results are statistically significant ( $F_{(4-122)} = 39,365$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).  $R^2$  value of model found to be ,563 and the corrected  $R^2$  value was found to be ,549. This finding shows that the independent variable of mental intelligence explains about 55% of the changes in the dimension of the happiness dependent variable. Considering the importance of the independent variable in this relationship influencing the dependent variable, based on the beta indicator, the significant and positive effect is in the dimensions of awareness ( $\beta=.375$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and conscious state expansion ( $\beta=.373$ ;  $p < .01$ ). According to the results, as awareness and conscious state expansion, which are sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, increase, the level of happiness may increase. Briefly, it can be said that spiritual intelligence has positive effects on happiness.

## Discussion

This study, in which the relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness was investigated, was carried out in the sample of hockey players. According to the results of the correlation analysis of the research, it was determined that there is

a positive and moderately significant relationship between the four dimensions of the spiritual intelligence scale, which are important existential thinking, personal meaning production, awareness and conscious state expansion, and happiness. Based on these findings, it can be said that there are positive relationships between spiritual intelligence and happiness (Table 2).

According to the results of the regression analysis of the study, it was found that the independent variable of spiritual intelligence explained approximately 55% of the changes in the dimension of the dependent variable of happiness. Considering the importance of the independent variable in this relationship influencing the dependent variable, based on the beta indicator, it was determined that the significant and positive effect was in the dimensions of awareness and conscious state expansion. According to the results, as awareness and conscious state expansion, which are sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, increase, the level of happiness may increase. In other words, it can be said that spiritual intelligence has positive effects on happiness. (Table 3). According to the relevant results, the  $h_3$  and  $h_4$  hypotheses created within the scope of the research model have been supported.

Research in the literature, Mirzaaghazzade Farzan, Amirjad Hoseinzadeh (2016) found a positive correlation between research studies about 212 national athletes and their life satisfaction. Not ameliorated (better designed from finding) stressors coped with using the equip body transition. Another high is those who are in a better situation with the relative spirituality of the athletes (Arnout, Alkhatib, Abdel Rahman, Pavlovic, Al-Dabbagh, & Latyshsh, 2019). Faribors, Fatemeh and Hamidreza (2010) found positive correlations between spiritual intelligence and happiness in their research with the participation of nurses. In their related research, Subraniam and Panchanatham (2015) suggest that there are positive relationships between spiritual intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior, and that spiritual intelligence is the driving force of organizational citizenship behavior. It has been determined that there is significant and a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and the meaning of life and life satisfaction, and that spiritual intelligence has positive effects on the meaning of life and satisfaction with life (Söylemez & Koç, 2019; Jaferi & Hesampour, 2017; Kalantarkousheh, Nickamal, Amanollahi, & Dehghani, 2014). Munawar and Omama Tariq (2018), Kumawat and Puri (2019) suggest that there is life satisfaction and spiritual intelligence between a positive relationship. Bigdeloo and Bozorgi (2016) reported that there are positive and significant relationships between life satisfaction and spiritual intelligence and that spiritual intelligence can predict life satisfaction. Spirituality intelligence helps to resilience in people who experience stress (Khosravi & Nikmanesh, 2014). Chin, Raman, Yeow, and Eze (2012) determined that spiritual intelligence has an important role on creativity and innovation. Shateri, Hayat, and Jayerv (2019) reported that a higher level of mental

intelligence leads to a higher level of quality. Moreover, the sample of this research is hockey players. There are many studies that show that sports have a positive effect on happiness. For example, Özsarı and Çetin (2022) found in their related research that there is a positive relationship between attitude towards sports. It was determined by Zhang and Chen (2019) that there are positive relationships between sports and happiness. Gonzales, Fernandez, Ordonez and Morales (2017) concluded that sportive activities support higher levels of happiness, as well as improve socialization and therefore help people. It has been determined by Özgün, Yaşartürk, Ayhan, and Bozkuş (2017) that as handball players' motivation for success in sportive activities increases, their happiness levels also increase. Khazae-pool, Sadeghi, Majlessi, and Rahimi (2015) concluded in their research that regular exercise has a positive contribution to the happiness of older adults. Rodriguez-Bravo, De-Juanas, and Garcia-Castilla (2020) emphasize that sports activities have positive effects on the psychological state of Spanish and Colombian youth.

### **Conclusion**

It has been concluded that there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between happiness and existential thinking, personal meaning production, awareness and conscious state expansion, which are sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence; awareness and conscious state expansion, which are sub-dimensions of spiritual intelligence, have a significant positive contribution in explaining the effect of spiritual intelligence on happiness, and the happiness of the athletes will increase with the increase in their awareness and conscious state expansion depending on their spiritual intelligence.

It is a fact that the concept of spiritual intelligence, which is believed to exist in human beings and waiting for its features to be revealed by further discovery and researches with the participation of different universe and sample groups will contribute to the relevant literature. In the future new studies can be carried out with the participation of different universe and sample groups.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study

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Research Article

# Spiritual Well-being as a Mediator between Internet Addiction and Alienation

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## Abstract

One of the negative effects of Internet addiction on individuals' personal and social life is alienation. Spiritual well-being affects both Internet addiction and the level of alienation. The present study investigated the mediator effect of spiritual well-being in the relationship between Internet addiction and alienation. The study was conducted with 320 college students: 183 (57.2%) female and 137 (42.8%) male. The ages of participants ranged from 19 to 35, and the mean age was 20.74. Data were collected using a personal information form, an Internet addiction scale, an alienation scale, and a spiritual well-being scale. The analyses showed that Internet addiction, alienation, and spiritual well-being were significantly correlated. Internet addiction significantly predicted alienation and spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being significantly predicted alienation. It was found that spiritual well-being partially mediated (indirect effect = .1525) the relationship between Internet addiction and alienation. The results show that when spiritual well-being increases, alienation decreases.

## Keywords:

Internet addiction • alienation • spiritual well-being • mediation

## İnternet Bağımlılığı ile Yabancılaşma Arasındaki İlişkide Aracı Değişken Olarak Spiritüel İyi Oluş

### Öz

İnternet bağımlılığının bireyin kişisel ve sosyal hayatı üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerinden biri de yabancılaşmadır. Spiritüel iyi oluş hem internet bağımlılığı hem de yabancılaşma düzeyi üzerinde etkilidir. Bu çalışmada, internet bağımlılığı ile yabancılaşma arasındaki ilişkide spiritüel iyi oluşun etkisi araştırılmıştır. Çalışma 183'ü (%57.2) kadın, 137'si (%42.8) erkek olmak üzere 320 üniversite öğrencisi üzerinde yapılmıştır. Katılımcıların yaşları 19-35 arasında değişmekte olup, yaş ortalamaları 20.74'tür. Veriler kişisel bilgi formu, internet bağımlılığı ölçeği, yabancılaşma ölçeği ve spiritüel iyi oluş ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Analiz sonuçları internet bağımlılığı ile yabancılaşma ve spiritüel iyi oluş arasında anlamlı ilişkiler olduğu göstermiştir. İnternet bağımlılığı yabancılaşma ve spiritüel iyi oluşu anlamlı bir şekilde yordamaktadır. Spiritüel iyi oluş yabancılaşmayı anlamlı bir şekilde yordamaktadır. Spiritüel iyi oluşun internet bağımlılığı ile yabancılaşma arasındaki ilişkide kısmi aracılık yaptığı bulunmuştur (dolaylı etki= .1525). Sonuçları spiritüel iyi oluş arttığında yabancılaşmanın azaldığını göstermektedir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

İnternet bağımlılığı • yabancılaşma • spiritüel iyi oluş • aracılık

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Internet addiction covers a wide range of maladaptive behaviors, such as cyber relationship addiction, cyber-sex addiction, compulsive gambling, information overload, and online shopping (Craparo, 2011). Internet addiction has been affecting people more and more as humanity moves toward a more technological world and depending on the intense use of the Internet, which has increased dramatically in terms of all aspects of life with the COVID-19 pandemic process (e.g., Tanhan, 2020; Tanhan et al., 2021). By June 2022, 69% of the world population used the Internet. There was a 1416% increase in Internet use between 2000 and 2022 (Internetworldstats.com, 2022). The rate of Internet use in Turkish households was 94.1%, and the use of the Internet between the ages of 16 and 34 was 96% (TSI, 2022). Internet use is quite high in the 16-34 age group. Overuse of the Internet can cause problems, such as struggles with time management, health problems, deterioration in relationships, and preventing the fulfillment of daily responsibilities (Chou & Hsiao, 2000).

Different factors are effective in the intense use of the Internet. The reasons for the serious increase in Internet use can be listed as it's becoming an increasingly unrivaled tool for research, entertainment, and communication (Ko et al., 2012). It makes life easier and is accessible almost everywhere (Yen et al., 2009). The Internet also provides a space for people to express themselves as they prefer, creates a safe environment for expressing secret feelings, and provides a means for escaping negative feelings (Young, 1997).

Internet addiction is an impulse control disorder not involving intoxication (Young (1999). Internet addiction is characterized by symptoms such as constant preoccupation with the Internet, loss of control over Internet use, lying about Internet use or hiding time spent online psychological withdrawal, and continuing use despite negative consequences (Young, 2007).

Internet addiction is negatively associated with spiritual well-being (Ahmadi et al., 2018), psychological resilience (Robertson et al., 2018), and self-concept clarity (Israelashvili et al., 2012), and positively associated with alienation (Dargahi & Razavi, 2007; Li et al., 2010), depression, anxiety, stress and loneliness (Ostovar et al., 2016; Younes et al., 2016).

This study examines the mediating effect of spiritual well-being on the relationship between Internet addiction and alienation among college students. In order to remove or minimize the negative effects of Internet addiction, it is important to show the variables that are positively and negatively associated with Internet addiction. It is important to examine the variables that affect Internet addiction and the ones Internet addiction affects. In this study, first of all, the concept of alienation, which is affected by Internet addiction, will be discussed. Then, spiritual well-being, which affects both variables, will be discussed.

## **Alienation**

Alienation is a state in which something or someone is distanced from another thing or person, and its functional or semantic sharing with another thing or person is terminated (Cevizci, 1999). The concept of alienation was originally used to refer to insanity. The words “aliéné” in French and “alienado” in Spanish were used to describe psychotic individuals. However, in the 20th century, the concept evolved to refer to the alienation of the individual self within society (Fromm, 2008). Hegel and then Marx began to use the concept to mean dehumanization. Recently, alienation has also been used to refer to an individual’s loss of independence, getting away from people, and from one’s own nature (Kaufmann, 1980). With this meaning, the concept of alienation has become a subject of psychology as much as philosophy.

Seeman (1959) defines alienation as having five components. The first is *weakness*. Weakness refers to the individual’s loss of control over the conditions that affect her/his life. Another component is *meaninglessness*, which refers to actions having no meaning or purpose and disconnection between one’s actions and goals. The third component *anomie* refers to how social norms have lost their meaning for the individual, and the individuals show behaviors not approved by social norms in order to reach their goals. The fourth component is *isolation*, which refers to the isolation that occurs when individuals reject social values and goals. The last component is the *individual’s self-alienation*, which refers to when an individual’s behavior becomes a tool for the satisfaction of others rather than for herself/himself.

Dean (1961) discusses three forms of alienation: weakness, anomie, and social isolation. *Weakness* is an individual’s effort outside of her/his purpose by focusing on areas not related with her/his own life. *Anomie* refers to an individual’s conflict with social norms by experiencing feelings of anxiety and meaninglessness against group norms. *Social isolation* is when an individual withdraws from social relationships and isolates herself/himself from group norms.

According to Fromm (2008), an individual who is disconnected from her/his inner world is an alienated individual. The alienated individual has lost her/his sense of self. The sense of self arises from the individual seeing herself/himself as the subject of her/his experiences, thoughts, feelings, decisions, judgments, and actions. The alienated individual, on the other hand, sees not herself/himself but others, and society as the subject of life. She/He cannot go beyond the general judgments of society. The alienated individual, on the other hand, sees not herself/himself but others, and society as the subject of life. This makes her/his insecure, unhappy, restless, and distressed. The alienated individual is unhappy, she/he tries to cover her/his unhappiness with entertainment consumption. According to Fromm (2008), the alienated individual uses most of her/his energy to stabilize or hide her/his uneasiness.

With the introduction of the Internet, feelings, thoughts, and habits began to change. Virtual life, virtual behavior, and virtual cultures emerged. Virtual worlds began to create new identities. The real and virtual identity of the individual began to intertwine, causing the individual to be alienated from herself/himself (Karagülle & Çaycı, 2014). A relationship has been observed between pathological Internet use and presenting oneself with a different identity in the virtual world (Çetin & Ceyhan, 2014). Internet addiction is associated with alienation because it is a pathological condition that prevents the individual from being herself/himself by imposing the new norms of the virtual world on the individual and deactivating the will of the individual.

A positive relationship has been found between negative use of technology and alienation (Babaoğlu et al., 2016), Internet addiction and alienation (Li et al., 2010), social exclusion (Poon, 2018; Taş & Öztosun, 2018), isolation (Shaw & Black, 2008; Davis, 2001), and social isolation and daily Internet use (Müezzın, 2017). Based on the observed relationship between Internet addiction and alienation, we suggest that decreasing Internet addiction will have an effect on decreasing the level of alienation.

### **Spiritual Well-being**

Spirituality has gained great attention in the last decades in different disciplines including mental health (Tanhan & Young, 2021). Spirituality, which comes from the Latin origin *spiritus*, means breath and life. The concepts of spirituality and religion are often confused (Hill et al., 2000): while religion was used in a broad sense including spirituality in the 1960s and 1970s, it has since come to be seen as separate from religion and religious practices (Peterman et al., 2002). Although spirituality is closer to religiosity than any other social concept, it is a concept different from religiosity (Moberg & Brussek, 1978). Authenticity and naturalness are key concepts of spirituality (Helminiak, 2001). From this definition, psychotherapists can distinguish spirituality from a belief in God or from institutionalized religions and theistic expressions, as including respect, nurture, and getting beyond institutionalization (Helminiak, 2001; Tanhan, 2019).

Spirituality has been at the center of thousand-year-old grounded practices and traditions, as well as more recent modalities of mental health treatment, including acceptance and commitment therapy (Tanhan, 2019). An individual without spirituality will be perceived as an incomplete individual (O'Brien, 1982). Spirituality can be defined as an individual's seeking for meaning in life and living life in line with this meaning (Rohde et al., 2017).

Spirituality has two dimensions. The vertical dimension includes the individual's relationship with a transcendent power (God) and system of values. The horizontal

dimension, on the other hand, includes the relationship of the individual with self, others, and the environment (Ross, 1995). Transcendence, referring to the dimension of awareness and experience beyond being physical, is a human need. Transcendence expresses the feeling of well-being an individual experiences when she/he finds a goal to which she/he can devote herself/himself (Ellison, 1983).

Spiritual well-being has been defined as the willingness to seek meaning and purpose in the existence of human beings (Opatz, 1986). It has also been defined as a situation that expresses an identity, feeling of integrity, and positive feelings, behaviors, and cognitions that provide satisfaction, beauty, joy, love, respect, positive attitude, inner peace, harmony, and direction (Gomez & Fisher, 2003). Spiritual well-being is evaluated not as a goal that can be achieved or reached at once, but as a search that continues for a lifetime (Moberg, 1984).

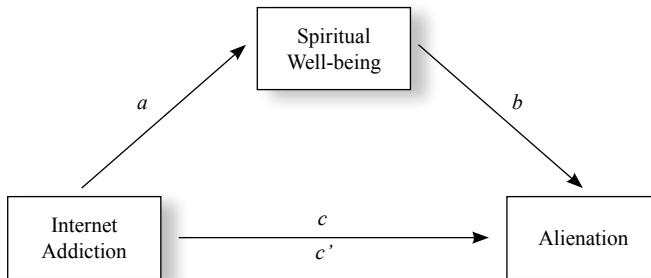
Spiritual well-being is positively associated with well-being, being extraverted, happiness (Gomez & Fisher, 2003; Tanhan & Francisco, 2019), quality of life (Allahbakhshian et al., 2010; Tanhan & Strack, 2020), the spirit to fight, level of income and fatalism (Cotton et al., 1999) and sense of coherence and coping styles (Unterrainer et al., 2014). And it is negatively associated with neuroticism, psychoticism (Gomez & Fisher, 2003), the desire to die quickly, despair and suicidal thoughts (McClain et al., 2003), desperation (Cotton et al., 1999), symptoms of mental illness (Unterrainer et al., 2014), and depression (Bekelman et al., 2007; Fehring et al., 1987).

According to Internet addiction criteria (Griffiths, 2005; Young, 2007), an individual with Internet addiction loses control over Internet use. She/He is now a directed one. She/He continues to use the Internet even though she/he does not want to, and shows withdrawal symptoms when she/he stops using the Internet. The addicted individual does not face her/his feelings, runs away from her/his feelings, and takes refuge in the virtual world to cope with the negative emotions she/he cannot cope with. In this respect, it can be said that Internet addiction is related to the psychological dimension of alienation expressed by Fromm (2008) and will deepen the alienation even more.

In addition, Internet-addicted individuals conflict with other people due to their use of the Internet and therefore experience problems in social relations. The most important activity in the lives of these people is the Internet. In this respect, it can be said that Internet addiction is related to the dimensions of alienation, powerlessness, and social isolation, which is the subject of this study and expressed by Dean (1961.) In this context, it can be said that Internet addiction is effective on alienation. Spirituality is a motivating and adaptive power (Ekşi & Kardaş, 2017). An individual with spiritual well-being seeks harmony between her/his inner world and the outer world (Opatz, 1986). It can be said that spiritual well-being is negatively related to

both Internet addiction and alienation. It can be said that increasing spiritual well-being will reduce the direct effect of Internet addiction, which is seen as a mental health problem (Karacic & Oreskovic, 2017; Xiuqin et al., 2010; Yao & Zhong, 2014), on alienation. The absence of any research examining the relationship between these variables makes the study important. In the light of the literature, the following model has been proposed, and the proposed model has been tested:

**Figure 1**  
*Model Explaining Alienation*



We propose four hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Internet addiction predicts spiritual well-being (path “a”).

H<sub>2</sub>: Spiritual well-being predicts alienation (path “b”).

H<sub>3</sub>: Internet addiction predicts alienation (path “c”).

H<sub>4</sub>: Spiritual Well-being mediates the relationship between the internet addiction and alienation (path “c’”).

## Method

### Research Model

This study uses a correlational survey model. The relationships between variables were tested with mediation tests. Mediation tests are tests which require the existence of another variable in the relationship between two variables (Şimşek, 2007). A mediation model is any causal system and, in this system, at least one antecedent variable is proposed as influencing an outcome through a single intervening variable called a mediator (Hayes, 2018). Partial mediation allows  $c'$  to be significant. Because there are many explanations for social behavior, partial mediation is considered more reasonable than the full mediation model (MacKinnon, 2012).



## Study Group

Data were collected from 345 people for the study. Data analysis was conducted with 320 people after those who filled in the forms incompletely, and those who filled in the form of mosaics and extreme data were eliminated. The study group consisted of 320 randomly selected college students. In the first stage, the university to be researched was chosen randomly. In the second stage, since it is difficult to reach the list of all classes in the university, data were collected from each class level until the number determined for the sample was reached. 183 (57.2%) were female and 137 (42.8%) were male. The participants' ages ranged between 19 and 35. The mean age is 20.74, and the standard deviation is 1.362.

## Data Collection Instruments

### Internet Addiction Scale

Young's Internet addiction test (Young, 1998a) was made into a short form by Pawlikowski et al. (2013) and it was adapted for use in Turkey by Kutlu et al. (2016). The scale has a 5-Likert type and consists of 12 items and a single factor. Sample scale items are "How often do you stay online longer, neglecting family chores?" and "How often do you keep it a secret or get defensive when someone asks what you are doing online?" KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) coefficient factor .91, which was obtained as a result of exploratory factor analysis and Barlett Sphericity test  $\chi^2$  value of 2077.04, show that the scale is suitable for factor analysis. Fit indices obtained through confirmatory factor analysis ( $\chi^2=144.93$ ,  $SD=52$ ,  $RMSEA=0.072$ ,  $RMR=0.70$ ,  $GFI=0.93$ ,  $AGFI=0.90$ ,  $CFI=0.95$  and  $IFI=0.91$ ) show that scale values are within acceptable limits. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient obtained as a result of reliability is .91. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient obtained within the context of the present study is .81.

### Alienation Scale

This scale was developed by Dean (1961) and adapted for use in Turkey by Güğərçin and Aksay (2017). The scale is a 5-Likert type scale and consists of 20 items and three sub-dimensions (isolation, powerlessness, and normlessness). Sample scale items are "The number of ties that bind people together has decreased these days" and "Sometimes I feel completely alone in the world." Exploratory factor analysis found that the three sub-dimensions explained 55% of the scale's variance. Confirmatory factor analysis (CMIN/DF:1.72; CFI: .94; RMSEA:06; SRMR:.93; TLI:.93) show that the model gave a good fit. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .88 for total score. The internal consistency coefficient obtained within the scope of this study is .71.

### **Spiritual Well-Being Scale**

The scale was developed by Ekşi and Kardaş (2017). The scale is a 5-Likert type scale and it consists of 29 items and 3 sub-dimensions (transcendence, harmony with nature, and anomie). Sample scale items are “I think nature should be respected” and “Being connected to a divine power gives me confidence.” The exploratory factor analysis found that the three sub-dimensions explained 58.337% of the total variance regarding the scale. Fit indices obtained as a result of the confirmatory factor analysis ( $\chi^2/SD = 4.11$ ,  $RMSEA = .06$ ,  $SRMR = .50$ ,  $NFI = .90$ ,  $CFI = .92$ ) showed that the model had a good fit. The Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient was found as .89 for the total score of the scale. The internal consistency coefficient obtained within the scope of this study is .82.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data were collected face to face from students on a voluntary basis. Students were told that the data obtained would be used only for scientific purposes. Ethics committee permission was obtained (... University Ethics Committee, Date:06/07/2022, Number: 48/16). SPSS and SPSS add-in PROCESS were used for data analysis. The effect of the mediating variable was measured with PROCESS model 4, which is a macro added to the SPSS program by Hayes (2012). This add-in, which uses a non-parametrical Bootstrap method, performs analysis with a 95% confidence interval on a sample size of 5000 individuals with resampling. The effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable was calculated with direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect scores. The efficiency of the mediating variable was calculated with a bootstrap confidence interval. The lower and upper limits of the confidence interval (BootLLCI-BootULCI) being below or above zero and the absence of “0” between the two values shows that the intermediary variable mediates. The Bootstrap method also decreases TYPE II error (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

## Results

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of participants and the relationships of these characteristics to other variables.

**Table 1**  
*Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants*

Variables	N=320 f, n (%)	M/SD	t *Gender	p	F*Grade	Post hoc
Gender						
Female(F)	183 (57.2)					
Male(M)	137 (42.8)					
Grade Level						
1. grade						
2. grade	45 (14.1)					
3. grade	168 (52.5)					
4. grade	71 (22.2)					
	36 (11.3)					
Age						
		20.74/1.36				
IA		28.15/7.16	.281	p>.05	1.02	-
A		122.99/10.28	-.121	p>.05	.212	-
SWB		66.96/9.12	1.81	p>.05	1.32	-

IA: Internet addiction; A: Alienation; SWB: Spiritual well-being.

According to Table 1, internet addiction ( $t_{(318)}=.281$ ,  $p>.05$ ), alienation ( $t_{(318)}=.121$ ,  $p>.05$ ) and spiritual well-being ( $t_{(318)}=1.81$ ,  $p>.05$ ) do not differ by gender. Similarly, internet addiction ( $F_{(3,316)}=1.02$ ,  $p>.05$ ), alienation ( $F_{(3,316)}=.212$ ,  $p>.05$ ) and spiritual well-being ( $F_{(3,316)}=1.32$ ,  $p>.05$ ) do not differ significantly by grade level.

Before the model was tested, descriptive statistics of the variables and the association of the variables with each other were examined and the results obtained are given in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients of the Variables*

Variables	N	M/Sd	Skewness	Kurtosis	IA	A	SWB
IA	320	28.15/7.16	.409	-.054	-		
A	320	66.96/9.12	-.061	.150	.371**	-	
SWB	320	122.99/10.28	-.400	.081	-.392**	-.404**	-

\*\*p<.01, IA: Internet Addiction; A: Alienation; SWB: Spiritual well-being.

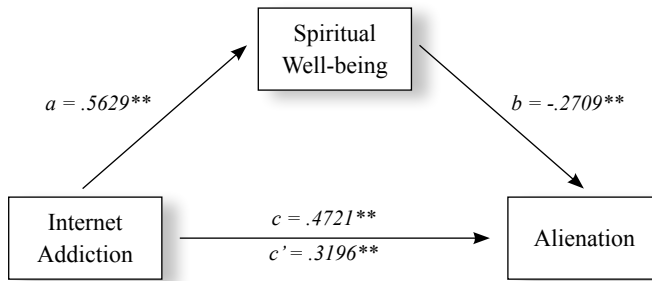
According to Table 2, there is a moderately positive relationship between internet addiction and alienation ( $r=.37$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and a moderately negative relationship between Internet addiction and spiritual well-being ( $r=.39$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

### Mediation Analysis

The mediation model of spiritual well-being on the relationship between Internet addiction and alienation is shown below.

**Figure 2**

*Model on the Mediating Effect of Spiritual Well-Being on The Relationship between Internet Addiction and Alienation*



\*\*p< .01

Figure 2 shows the a, b, c, and c' pathways and the standardized regression coefficients of these pathways for the mediating effect of spiritual well-being on the relationship between Internet addiction and alienation. Four conditions are put forward for mediator model testing. In this model, the independent variable should predict the dependent variable, the independent variable should predict the mediating variable, and the mediating variable should predict the dependent variable. When the mediating variable is included in the analysis with the independent variable, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should decrease to zero or should decrease significantly. When the mediating variable is included in the analysis, the independent variable becoming zero (0) shows full mediation, while a significant decrease shows partial mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

In examining the model, we see that Internet addiction negatively predicts spiritual well-being ( $a = -.5629^{**}$ ; 95% CI [-.7086, -.4172]); spiritual well-being negatively predicts alienation ( $b = -.2709^{**}$ ; 95% CI [-.3653, -.1766]); and Internet addiction positively predicts alienation ( $c = .4721^{**}$ ; 95% CI [.3614, .6027]). When the mediating variable is included in the analysis, the regression coefficient between Internet addiction and alienation becomes ( $c' = .3196^{**}$ ; 95% CI [.4551, 1842]). With the addition of spiritual well-being in the model, a significant decrease (from  $c = .4721$  to  $c' = .3196$ ) occurs in the regression coefficient. Direct effect, indirect effect, total effect, and bootstrap confidence were examined to test whether the decrease that occurred after the mediating variable was included in the model was due to the effect of the mediating variable. The results are given in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect Data of The Independent Variable on Dependent Variable and Bootstrap Confidence Interval Data*

The effect mediated by spiritual well-being	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Bootstrap Confidence Interval BootLLCI-BootULCI	Type of Mediation
IA-A	.4721	.3196	.1525	.0961, .2170	Partial

According to these results, the total effect of Internet addiction on alienation is  $.4721$   $p < .000$ , with a direct effect of  $.3196$   $p < .000$  and an indirect effect of  $.1525$   $p < .000$ . The Bootstrap confidence interval is above zero ( $.0961$ -. $.2170$ ) and '0' is not between the two values. According to these results, spiritual well-being is a partial mediator between Internet addiction and alienation.

## Discussion

This study examined the mediating effect of spiritual well-being in the relationship between Internet addiction and alienation in a population of college students and found that in this population, spiritual well-being has a partial mediating effect between Internet addiction and alienation.

The first hypothesis of the study was that Internet addiction predicts spiritual well-being. This hypothesis was confirmed, with internet addiction negatively predicting spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being has been found to be negatively associated with both behavioral addictions such as Internet addiction (Ahmadi et al., 2018), smartphone addiction (Shim, 2019), social media addiction (Wood et al., 2016), and chemical addictions such as alcohol dependence and substance use (Dermatis & Galanter, 2016; Hill et al., 2000). In addition, it has been found that spiritual individuals have lower levels of using Internet pornography (Short et al., 2015). In other words, both substance addiction and Internet addiction decrease as spiritual well-being increases.

Spiritual well-being is positively associated with meaning (Rohde et al., 2017), naturalness and originality (Helminiak, 2001), life quality (Allahbakhshian et al., 2010), purpose (Ellison, 1983) and happiness (Gomez & Fisher, 2003). Smartphone addiction, which can be seen as a reflection of Internet addiction, is negatively associated with living a meaningful and purposeful life (Çevik et al., 2020; Yaran, 2020). Internet addiction has also been shown to decrease quality of life (Tanhan, 2020; Young et al., 1999).

Spiritual well-being refers to positive emotions, behaviors, and cognitions such as satisfaction, sense of wholeness, a positive attitude, inner peace, harmony, and purpose (Gomez & Fisher, 2003). On the other hand, Internet addiction refers to negative emotions such as moodiness, irritability, conflicts in the inner world of the individual, loss of control over her/his life, conflict with other people, and irresponsible behavior in the work, family, and academic field (Griffiths, 2005). In this context, it can be said that when Internet addiction increases, positive emotions, thoughts, and attitudes such as harmony, purpose, satisfaction, and inner peace will decrease, in other words, spiritual well-being will decrease.

The second hypothesis of the study was that spiritual well-being predicts alienation. This hypothesis was confirmed, with spiritual well-being negatively predicting alienation. Some studies which show that alienation is negatively associated with spiritual well-being (Jaberi, et al., 2019; Schwartz, 2021; Vahedi & Nazari, 2011). Spiritual well-being is positively associated with resilience in the face of difficulties (Cotton et al., 1999; Tanhan et al., 2021). On the other hand, it is seen that one of the dimensions of alienation is weakness, which is being far from the spirit of struggle and accepting the imposition of conditions (Dean, 1961). Similarly, studies show that spiritual well-being is positively associated with coherence and adaptability (Tanhan & Francisco, 2019; Unterrainer et al., 2010), while alienation consists of the components of anomie and isolation beyond coherence and adaptability. Spiritual well-being increases psychological well-being and psychosocial health (Gomez & Fisher, 2003; Karakus et al., 2021; Tanhan, 2019, 2020). An alienated individual who moves away from others and from her/his own nature (Kaufmann, 1980) is likely to have high levels of psychological stress (Ifeagwazi et al., 2015). Like some previous studies, our research suggests that low spiritual well-being is correlated with increased alienation.

The third hypothesis of the study was that Internet addiction predicts alienation. This hypothesis was confirmed, with Internet addiction positively predicting alienation. Internet addiction has been found to be associated with alienation (Li et al., 2010), and sub-dimensions of alienation such as social exclusion (Poon, 2018; Tas & Öztosun, 2018), and isolation (Davis, 2001; Shaw & Black, 2008). Social isolation has also been found to be positively associated with the amount of daily Internet use (Müezzini, 2017). One criterion for Internet addiction is a loss of control over one's Internet use (Shapira et al., 2000) and another is having the Internet continually occupy one's mind against their will (Young, 1998b). Both criteria can produce weakness (one of the sub-dimensions of alienation) which in this case refers to an individual's loss of control over her/his life (Seeman, 1959).

An individual's excessive involvement in the virtual world can lead to their isolation from the offline society. Excessive Internet use can lead to damaged relationships, missed opportunities in education and business (Tanhan, 2020; Young, 1998b), and exclusion from the social life. These risks (such as endangering job, education, career, and experiencing problems in private life) may also further alienate someone from social norms and drive them to anomie.

The fourth hypothesis of the study was that spiritual well-being mediates the relationship between internet addiction and alienation. This hypothesis was confirmed, with spiritual well-being partially mediating the relationship between internet addiction and alienation. In other words, individuals with Internet addiction become

alienated, while a high spiritual well-being level decreases alienation. Spiritual well-being is an important factor in increasing psychological functioning (McClain et al., 2003; Tanhan, 2019, 2020). Low psychological functioning may cause Internet addiction (Nam et al., 2018), which is positively associated with psychological problems. And these problems can increase levels of alienation (Fromm, 2008). Spiritual well-being is negatively associated with psychological problems such as despair and suicidal thoughts (McClain et al., 2003), depression (Bekelman et al., 2007; Fehring et al., 1987), neuroticism, and aggression (Unterrainer et al., 2010). Therefore, increasing spiritual well-being can be effective at both decreasing Internet addiction and decreasing the negative effect of Internet addiction on alienation.

### **Limitations**

The present study has limitations. Participants in this study were college students in Turkey. This may constitute a limitation in generalizing the results of the study to people in the same age group. Another limitation is the use of previously constructed quantitative data collection tools. Such tools may not fully capture complex concepts like addiction, spirituality, and well-being. The socio-demographic variables (e.g., gender, age and grade level) used in the study are limited. This may create a limitation for a more detailed assessment of the working group.

### **Implications and Suggestions**

Considering the effect of Internet addiction on alienation, mental health professionals can investigate the possible effects of Internet addiction on clients struggling with alienation. Mental health professionals can try to increase the spiritual well-being levels of individuals who experience Internet addiction tendency or alienation, considering that spiritual well-being does not represent an institutional religion, it is a structure different from religion (Moberg & Brussek, 1978; Tanhan, 2020), and it is a strengthening factor, especially for individuals who feel desperate (Helminiak, 2001; Tanhan, 2019, 2020).

Educators can add modules to their psycho-education programs to increase spiritual well-being in their psycho-education programs to reduce Internet addiction by considering the effect of Internet addiction on spiritual well-being. In addition, educators can add modules to and increase spiritual well-being. in their psycho-education programs that they will prepare to reduce the alienation level of individuals, taking into account the effect of spiritual well-being on alienation. Further, educators can utilize small-group work to serve as an effective approach for the facilitation of social well-being and social connectedness (Dari et al., 2021).

Researchers can test the results of this preliminary research by investigating the

relationship between these variables in different groups (e.g., students studying in different departments, adolescents, and adults). Researchers can reduce these limitations by using different tools (e.g., interviews) and research methods (e.g., longitudinal studies). Collaborative efforts such as Community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods can be used to explore the causes and effects of Internet addiction in collaboration with populations most impacted by it (Dari et al., 2019). Contextually sensitive, and comprehensive phenomenological qualitative methods such as Online Photovoice offer new mediums for exploring individual perspectives (OPV, Tanhan, 2020; Tanhan & Strack, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

In this study on college students in Turkey, a relationship was determined between Internet addiction, spiritual well-being, and alienation. Our findings show that Internet addiction plays an important role in alienation in this sample. It also shows that spiritual well-being can be effective at both reducing Internet addiction and reducing alienation. In addition, spiritual well-being can decrease the negative effect of Internet addiction on alienation.

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## **Data availability**

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## **Declarations**

**Ethical Approval:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the national ethical standards and with the Helsinki declaration. Ethical approval was obtained from the university's ethics committee for the study.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent was obtained from the students participating in the study.

**Conflict of Interests:** I report no conflict of interest.



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Research Article

# Well-Being and Spiritual Intelligence Predict Attitudes of Adolescents' Towards Violence

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## Abstract

In this study, it is aimed to examine the relationships between the well-being, spiritual intelligence and attitudes of adolescents living in Turkey towards violence. The sample of the study consists of 466 high school students (194 girls, 272 boys) aged between 14 and 19, selected using the convenience sampling method. In the study, "Scale for Spiritual Intelligence", "Five-Dimensional Well-being for Adolescents (EPOCH) Scale" and "Attitude towards Violence Scale for Adolescents" and demographic information form were used as measurement tools. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the predictiveness of adolescents' well-being and spiritual intelligence on their attitudes towards violence. According to the findings obtained from the research, there is a moderately negative and significant relationship between attitude towards violence and well-being. It is seen that there is a low negative and significant relationship between attitude towards violence and spiritual intelligence. It was identified that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between well-being and spiritual intelligence scores. The well-being variable explaining 32% of the attitude scores towards violence was first included in the staged multiple regression analysis performed. And in the second stage, the spiritual intelligence variable, which contributes 2% to the explained variance, was also included. When the total variance explained is examined, it is seen that the variables of well-being and spiritual intelligence together explain 34% of the total variance in the attitude scores towards violence. This finding shows us that the change in well-being and spiritual intelligence scores predicts the change in the scores of the attitude towards violence.

## Keywords:

Turkish adolescents • Spiritual intelligence • Adolescence • Well-being • Violence

## İyi Oluş ve Manevi Zeka Ergenlerin Şiddete Yönelik Tutumlarını Yordar

### Öz

Bu çalışmada Türkiye'de yaşayan ergenlerin iyi oluş, manevi zekâ ve şiddete yönelik tutumları arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini elverişlilik örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak seçilen, yaşları 14 ile 19 arasında değişen 466 lise (194 kız, 272 erkek) öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada ölçme aracı olarak "Manevi Zekâ Ölçeği (SIS)", "Ergenler İçin Beş Boyutlu İyi Oluş (EPOCH) Ölçeği" ve "Ergenler için Şiddete Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği" ve Demografik Bilgi Formu kullanılmıştır. Ergenlerin iyi oluşlarının ve manevi zekalarının şiddete karşı tutumları üzerindeki yordayıcılığını test etmek için hiyerarşik regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgulara göre; şiddete yönelik tutum ile iyi oluş arasında orta düzeyde negatif ve anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Şiddete yönelik tutum ile manevi zekâ arasında düşük düzeyde negatif ve anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu görülmektedir. İyi oluş ile ve manevi zekâ puanları arasında orta düzeyde pozitif ve anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu belirlenmiştir. Yapılan aşamalı çoklu regresyon analizine ilk olarak şiddete yönelik tutum puanlarının %32'sini açıklayan iyi oluş değişkeni alınmıştır. İkinci aşamada ise açıklanan varyansa %2 katkı sağlayan manevi zekâ değişkeni de dahil edilmiştir. Açıklanan toplam varyansa bakıldığında ise, iyi oluş ve manevi zekâ değişkenlerinin birlikte şiddete yönelik tutum puanlarındaki toplam varyansın %34'ünü açıkladığı görülmektedir. Bu bulgu bize iyi oluş ve manevi zekâ puanlarındaki değişimin şiddete yönelik tutum puanlarındaki değişimi yordadığını göstermektedir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

Türk ergenler • Manevi zeka • Ergenlik • İyi oluş • Şiddet

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Adolescence is a complex transition period in which identity formation begins, the meaning and values of life are questioned, and the sense of self is restructured (Kulaksızoğlu, 2004; Steinberg, 2007; Yavuzer, 2001). The development and changes experienced during adolescence are quite high compared to other developmental periods and this increases the tendency to violence and aggression in adolescents (Genç, 2016; Çuhadaroğlu Çetin, 2008; Gözütok, 2008). Violence is to behave in a way that will have negative consequences for the physical integrity, spiritual integrity, belongings or cultural values of another person or persons (Michaud, 1991; Krug et al., 2002; Prescott et al., 2018). Adolescents who try to be independent by distancing away from family and authority may exhibit behaviors that are not accepted by the society while searching for the meaning of life, and an increase in the violent and aggressive behaviors of adolescents may be seen (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Heinrich & Gullone, 2006; Williams & Myers, 2004).

Well-being refers to the high level of positive feelings and thoughts about one's life; the negative evaluations and behaviors of adolescents with low well-being increase (Myers & Diener, 1995). Well-being refers to being in positive relationships with the other and exhibiting positive behaviors, as well as maintaining an existential struggle in life (Fagbenro et al., 2018; Keyes et al., 2002). In this existential struggle, spirituality is also an important component of one's mental health and well-being, and it is an important element for one to evaluate oneself and life positively and to have the desired positive behaviors (Baezzat et al., 2019; Garssen et al., 2021; Nosrati et al., 2018; Sadeghifard et al., 2020).

In adolescents seeking meaning and questioning the meaning of life, spiritual intelligence enables the adolescent to experience deep emotions, connect with the transcendent, recognize his/her self and establish meaningful relationships with others, and also increases the problem-solving ability of the person (Chaar et al., 2018; Hosseini et al., 2010; Kumar & Mehta, 2011; Nasel, 2004; Raisi et al., 2018; Vaughan, 2002). Spiritual intelligence is defined as the type of intelligence that allows one to search for and find meaning in life and enables to live in a context suitable for values (Nair & Paul, 2017; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

In this context, it is thought that finding meaning in life also by using spiritual intelligence will increase the well-being of the adolescent and will distance the person from negative behaviors (Charkhabi et al., 2014; Sanjaya, 2017; Seligman, 2002; Roman & Roman, 2018). According to the studies conducted, spiritual-oriented people are people with better mental and physical health functions and positive thinking tendencies; they generally do not engage in harmful and negative behaviors towards themselves and their environment and tend to be less violent as their spirituality increases (Behroozi et al., 2014; James et al., 2011; Larson & Larson, 2003; Salas-Wright et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2016; Thoresen, 2007; Yick, 2008).



This study, which is also designed to examine the relationships between attitudes of adolescents towards violence, their well-being and spiritual intelligence, is also planned based on Social Cognitive Theory. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory, one's learning is shaped according to environmental factors and personal values. This form of learning is the determinant of one's behavior in the social context. In this learning process, which is known as mutual determinism, personal factors and environmental factors are dynamic and are in constant interaction with each other (Bandura, 1978). Personal factors such as the spiritual values, emotional structure, moral behaviors and psychological well-being of the person are influenced by the environmental factors and also affect the environmental factors and become the determinants of their behaviors (Bandura, 1989; Holder et al., 2010). Based on this theoretical basis, it is thought that personal factors such as well-being and spiritual intelligence may be the determinants of attitudes towards violence.

According to Social Cognitive Learning Theory, people have the ability to self-regulate and can regulate their own feelings, thoughts and behaviors (Bandura, 1989; Glanz, 2002; Locke & Latham, 2006). In this context, it is thought that efforts to increase well-being and spirituality, which are among the personal factors, may reduce the display of violent behaviors. All this information suggests that well-being and spiritual intelligence may be effective in reducing attitudes towards violence in adolescents. As a result of the literature survey, it has been seen that, there are a limited number of studies in this field and it is thought that the study will contribute to the field by examining the relationships between the attitudes of the adolescents towards violence, their well-being and spiritual intelligence. In this context, the main objective of the study is to examine whether the attitudes towards violence in Turkish adolescents are predicted by well-being and spiritual intelligence. Within the framework of this main objective, the sub-objectives of the study are formed as follows:

- Is there a significant relationship between attitudes towards violence, psychological well-being and spiritual intelligence in adolescents?
- Do the psychological well-being and spiritual intelligence of the adolescents predict their attitudes towards violence?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

The research is patterned according to the relational screening method, which is one of the quantitative research methods, and aims to investigate the relationship between two or more variables. These models aim to determine whether there is a co-change between the variables, and if there is, the degree of this change (Heppner et al., 2013).

## **Population And Sample of The Research**

The sample of the research consists of students who continue their education in different high schools in Istanbul during the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. Of the students participating in the study, 194 are female (58.4%) and 272 (41.6%) are male. The age intervals ranged from 14 to 19 years; 74 (15.9%) are 14 years old, 118 (25.3%) are 15 years old, 115 (24.7%) are 16 years old, 105 (22.5%) are 17 years old, 42 (9.0%) are 18 years old and 12 (2.6%) are 19 years old. 112 (24.0%) of the students are studying at Anatolian High School and 354 (76.0%) are studying at Anatolian Imam Hatip High School. 135 (29.0%) of the students are 9th grade students, 158 (33.9%) are 10th grade students, 71 (15.2%) are 11th grade students, and 102 (21.9%) are 12th grade students. The sample is determined by the convenience sampling method. The convenience sampling method is selection of the sample from accessible and practicable units due to the limitations in terms of time, money and workforce. In this study, this method was preferred since it provides easier, faster and cheaper data collection compared to other sampling types (Büyüköztürk et al., 2017; Gürbüz & Şahin, 2014). An informed consent form was obtained from the parents of the adolescents who would participate in the study and attention was paid for the adolescents to be volunteering.

## **Data Collection Tools**

**Demographic Information Form.** The demographic information form prepared by the researcher was used to collect information about the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the research. This form includes questions about gender, age, grade level and school type variables.

**Scale for Spiritual Intelligence (SSI).** It was developed by Kumar and Mehta (2011). The scale was developed to create the concept of spiritual intelligence in collectivist cultures based on Eastern philosophy and to measure the spiritual intelligence of adolescents. There is no certain time limit on the scale, but it is preferred to give the first answer that comes to mind and not to leave the questions blank. It can be finished in an average of ten minutes. The scale items consist of a 5-point Likert scale type. The total score is obtained by summing the scores obtained from the sub-dimensions. It can be said that adolescents with high scores have high spiritual intelligence. The adaptation of the scale to Turkish was made by Erduran Tekin and Ekşi (2019), and as a result of the exploratory factor analysis. The Scale for Spiritual Intelligence, which consists of six factors (i.e., selfunderstanding, human values, compassion, conscience, commitment towards humanity, and purpose of life) according to the results from the completed exploratory factor analysis, consists of only four factors for the Turkish version. These four factors are self-understanding, human values, compassion, and conscience. The goodness of fit statistics obtained

as a result of confirmatory factor analysis are [ $X^2 = 335.17$ ,  $sd = 145$  ( $X^2/sd=2.33$ ), RMSEA 0.052, SRMR=0.049, GFI = 0.93, CFI=0.90, AGFI=0.91]. Internal consistency reliability Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for both samples for the whole scale, and it is found as .86 and .85. The results of the research revealed that the Turkish form of the Scale for Spiritual Intelligence is a valid and reliable measurement tool and can be used in scientific studies to be conducted in Turkey (Erduran Tekin and Ekşi, 2019). For this study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be .85.

**Five-Dimensional Well-Being Scale for Adolescents (EPOCH).** The EPOCH scale was developed by Kern et al. (2016) to determine the well-being of adolescents. It is the adolescent version of the well-being model developed by Seligman (2011). According to the EPOCH model, the dimensions of well-being are stated as engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness and happiness. The Turkish adaptation and validity reliability study of the scale was carried out by Demirci and Ekşi (2015) on 262 high school students. Confirmatory factor analysis fit indices of the scale, which consists of five sub-dimensions, were found to be at an acceptable level ( $X^2 = 381.29$ ,  $sd = 160$ , CFI = .98, IFI = .98, RFI = .96, NFI = .96, NNFI=.98, RMSEA = .074 and SRMR = .052). The factor loadings of the scale ranges from .37 to .84. The internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions vary between .72 and .88. The total score internal consistency coefficient is calculated as .95. Corrected item total score correlation coefficient values ranges between .41 and .77. The internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale were calculated as .88 for connectedness, .84 for engagement, .88 for happiness, .84 for optimism and .72 for perseverance. The sub-dimensions are scored by the 5-point Likert grading method. In the scale, individuals can get a score between 1 and 5 for each question. There are a total of 4 items in each dimension and there are a total of 20 items in the scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale for this study was found to be .89.

**Attitudes' Adolescents towards Violence Scale.** In this study, the Attitudes' Adolescents towards Violence Scale developed by Çetin (2004) was used to measure the attitudes of adolescents towards violence. In the scale developed as Likert type, the lowest score is 10 and the highest score is 50. The high scores obtained from the scale indicate a positive attitude towards violence. In other words, an adolescent who scores higher on the attitude towards violence scale approves violence and has a positive attitude towards violence. There are no items to be interpreted in reverse on the scale. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale for 10 items was found to be .85 (Çetin, 2011). For this study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be .81.

## Data Analysis

Before the data analysis, incomplete and incorrect coding was reviewed and the analysis was performed with SPSS 26 package program. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the predictiveness of well-being and spiritual intelligence of adolescents towards violence as well as descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient.

## Findings

This section includes the findings of the data obtained from this article, which aims to examine the relationship between adolescents' spiritual intelligence, well-being and attitudes towards violence, which is designed according to the relational scanning model, which is one of the quantitative research methods. Descriptive statistics of data; Correlations between spiritual intelligence, well-being and attitude towards violence variables and the model results of the regression analysis are presented in tables, respectively.

**Table 1.**  
*Descriptive Statistics Regarding Variable Scores*

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	Ss	min.	max.
Attitudes towards Violence	466	27,67	9,152	14	50
Well Being	466	65,97	14,694	33	100
Spiritual Intelligence	466	62,72	8,366	32	80

As seen in Table 1, it was determined that the average score that the students participating in the research got from attitudes towards violence scale was ( $\bar{x}=27,67$ ,  $ss=9,152$ ). It was observed that the total score and standard deviation from the well-being scale was ( $\bar{x}=65,97$ ,  $ss=14,694$ ), while the total score and standard deviation from the spiritual intelligence scale were found to be ( $\bar{x}=62,72$ ,  $ss=8,366$ )

**Table 2.**  
*The Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient Results to Determine the Relationship between Attitudes towards Violence, Well-being, and Spiritual Intelligence*

		1	2	3
1. Attitudes towards Violence	r	1	-,563**	-,380**
2. Well Being	r	-,563**	1	,459**
3. Spiritual Intelligence	r	-,380**	,459**	1
	N	466	466	466

\*\* p < .001

When Table 2 is examined, there is a moderately negative and significant relationship between attitude towards violence and well-being ( $r = -.563$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It is observed that there is a low level negative and significant relationship between attitude towards violence and spiritual intelligence ( $r = -.380$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It was determined that there is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between well-being and spiritual intelligence scores ( $r = .459$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Accordingly, it can be said that as well-being and spiritual intelligence increase, attitudes towards violence decrease, and as spiritual intelligence increases, well-being also increases.

Before determining the predictive effect of well-being and spiritual intelligence on the students' attitudes towards violence, the multicollinearity problem was examined among the predictor variables and it was found that there was no multicollinearity problem ( $VIF < 10$ , Tolerance value  $> .10$ ). The stepwise multiple regression analysis findings are presented in Table 3 in order to determine the predictive effect of well-being and spiritual intelligence on the students' attitudes towards violence.

**Table 3.**  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis about the Predictors (Well-Being and Spiritual Intelligence) of Attitude towards Violence*

Model	Predicting Variables	R	$\Delta R^2$	B	Standard Error	$\beta$	t	p
1.	Constant			50,798	1,615		31,451	.00
	Well Being	,563	,317	-,351	,024	-,563	-14,671	.00
2.	Constant			58,478	2,653		22,039	.00
	Well Being			-,306	0,27	-,492	-11,540	.00
	Spiritual Intelligence	,579	,336	-,169	0,47	-,154	-3,621	.00
$R = ,58$		$R^2 = ,34$	$F_{(2,465)} = 116,990$			$p < .001$		

As seen in Table 3, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine the variables that predict participant adolescents' attitudes towards violence. Well-being scores were included in the first block and spiritual intelligence scores were analyzed in the second block. According to the analysis results, it was seen that well-being explained 32% of the variance in attitudes towards violence ( $\beta = -.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When the effect of well-being was controlled, it was seen that spiritual intelligence in the second block additionally explained 2% of the variance ( $\beta = -.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It is seen that the analysis was completed in two stages and well-being was an important predictor in terms of contribution to the variance regarding the attitude scores of the students who participated in the study. Looking at the total variance explained, it shows that the variables of well-being and spiritual intelligence together explain 34% of the total variance in attitude scores towards violence. This finding shows us that the change in adolescents' well-being scores and spiritual intelligence scores explains and predicts the change in attitude scores towards violence, and that well-being is an important predictor in explaining adolescents' attitudes towards violence.

## Discussion

Adolescence is a period in which physical and emotional changes are intense, and violent and aggressive behaviors can be seen more in adolescents during this period (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994; Steinberg, 2007). Violence is also defined as a form of aggression that causes physical harm (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Huesmann & Taylor, 2006). In order for adolescents to have a decrease in their violent behaviors, they need to have control over these behaviors (Bandura, 1994). Studies show that

high well-being and spiritual intelligence of adolescents have a positive effect on their ability to control their violent behaviors (Gündoğan & Sargın, 2018; Kaukiainen et al., 2001; Sadeghifard et al., 2020; Raisi et al., 2018). In this study, the relationships between the attitudes adolescents towards violence, their well-being and spiritual intelligence and how their attitudes towards violence are predicted by their well-being and spiritual intelligence are examined.

According to the results obtained from the study, it is seen that there is a negative relationship between adolescents' attitude towards violence scores and their well-being and spiritual intelligence scores. It was observed that there was a positive relationship between well-being scores and spiritual intelligence scores. Accordingly, it can be said that as well-being and spiritual intelligence increase, attitudes towards violence decrease, and as spiritual intelligence increases, well-being also increases. According to the results of a study examining the relationships between spiritual intelligence and aggression representing violent behaviors during adolescence, similar to the results obtained in this study, a significant negative relationship was observed between spiritual intelligence and aggression (Karimi & Mohammadi, 2017). According to the results of a study examining the relationships between aggression behaviors and various types of well-being, again similar to the results obtained from the study, it was observed that there were significant negative relationships between well-being and aggression (Kaukiainen et al., 2001). The results of the study conducted to examine the effect of spiritual intelligence on students' aggressive behaviors supported the results obtained from this study and showed that spiritual intelligence encourages students to show ideal behavior and directs them to find a peaceful solution to all problems (Sakti & Alim, 2019). And according to the results of another study conducted with university students, it was observed that as the spiritual intelligence of the students increased, their aggressive behaviors decreased (Baloochi et al., 2018).

According to the results of the progressive multiple regression analysis, it is seen that the well-being of the students participating in the study is an important predictor of their contribution to the variance in terms of their attitude scores towards violence. When the total variance explained is examined, it is seen that the change in well-being and spiritual intelligence scores predicts 34% of the variance in attitude towards violence scores. According to the results of another study conducted to examine the relationships between aggression and subjective well-being of students, similar to the results obtained from this study, subjective well-being was found to be a significant predictor of aggression. According to the results, as the subjective well-being of the students decreases, their aggression increases at the same rate (Gündoğan & Sargın, 2018). Also, as a result of a study conducted to examine whether spiritual intelligence is a predictor of psychological well-being, similar to the results obtained in this study, but to a greater extent, it was observed that spiritual intelligence is a predictor of psychological well-

being. As a result of the regression analysis, spiritual intelligence explained twenty-six percent of the change in psychological well-being (Sotoodeh et al., 2016). In another study conducted with university students, it was seen that spirituality was the mediator between aggression and psychological resilience, while no direct high correlation was found between aggression and spirituality (Sadeghifard et al., 2020). In another study, the relationships between anger level, which form the basis of violent behaviors, and spiritual intelligence were examined and it was observed that the increase in spiritual intelligence reduced the anger level of the participants (Tarazoj et al., 2018). The results of some studies examining the relationships between spiritual intelligence and aggressive violent behaviors supporting the results obtained from this study show that there are negative relationships between spiritual intelligence and aggressive behaviors representing violence (Esmaili et al., 2021; Karimi & Mohammadi, 2020; Sakti & Alim, 2019). The results of a study examining the relationships between students' well-being and spirituality, by supporting the results obtained from this study show that there is a positive significant relationship between spirituality and well-being (Supriatna & Septian, 2021). Based on all these, it is thought that the well-being and spiritual intelligence of adolescents are related to their attitudes towards violence. Considering that well-being and spiritual intelligence are values that can be increased, it is thought that adolescents' attitudes towards violence can be reduced by increasing their well-being and spiritual intelligence.

### **Conclusion and Limitations of the Study**

Well-being and the development of spiritual intelligence in a sensitive development period such as adolescence will reduce the aggression behaviors and attitudes towards violence of adolescents in this period where impulsivity is intense. At the same time, will contribute to their finding meaning in life by increasing their psychological well-being. In order to reduce the attitudes of adolescents towards violence, mental health professionals working in the field are recommended to engage in activities that will increase the well-being of adolescents, to care about spiritual intelligence as a type of intelligence, and to engage in educational and therapeutic activities that will support adolescents in terms of development of spiritual intelligence. Other personal factors and environmental factors that may affect the attitudes of adolescents towards violence are recommended to be examined in other studies. In addition, it is also suggested that the role of well-being and spiritual intelligence of adolescents in their attitudes towards violence should be examined in depth with qualitative research methods.

The results obtained in this study are limited to the quantitative data obtained from the students continuing their education in different high schools in Istanbul. The study is limited to the data obtained during the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. The results obtained from the study are limited to the answers given

by the students to the questionnaires and the measurements made by the scale questions. In the study, the data were collected by the convenience sampling method, which is a limitation of the study. The study was planned according to Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory, and only two of the personal factors affecting adolescents were addressed and environmental factors were neglected. The fact that environmental factors that may affect attitudes towards violence were not included in the analysis is a limitation of this study.

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### Compliance with Ethical Standards

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. In addition informed consent was obtained from the parents of the students who participated in the study to be able to complete the scales.

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Original Article

# Spirituality in Narrative Therapy: A Review Study

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## Abstract

This review study aims to examine narrative therapy's perspective toward spirituality, the relationship between narrative therapy and spirituality, and the use of spirituality in narrative therapy techniques; the study also reveals what kinds of processes can be followed when working with spiritually or religious-oriented clients using a case example. Narrative therapy is a postmodern therapy approach that aims to understand individuals' identities, personalities, lives, and relationships through the stories they create. This approach gives importance to understanding the meanings individuals ascribe to both their own life stories as well as their personal relationships. Spirituality plays an active role as a part of individuals' stories by adding meaning and purpose to individuals' lives and their relationships and for this reason has an important place in narrative therapy. Narrative therapy places emphasis on both understanding the meanings individuals ascribe to their stories as well as re-authoring these stories in a functional way using certain techniques. Spirituality plays a role as an important resource in re-authoring the individual's story through narrative therapy's techniques. By emphasizing the role of spirituality in narrative therapy, this study will both contribute to the literature on narrative therapy as well as provide a perspective on how spirituality can be used in this approach.

## Keywords:

spirituality • narrative therapy • postmodern therapies • review study

## Narrative Terapide Maneviyat: Bir Derleme Çalışması

### Öz

Bu derleme çalışmasıyla narrative terapinin maneviyata yönelik bakış açısının, narrative terapi ve maneviyat arasındaki ilişkinin, maneviyatın narrative terapi tekniklerinde kullanımının incelenmesi amaçlanmış ve dini/manevi yönelimli danışanlarla çalışırken nasıl bir süreç takip edilebileceği bir vaka örneğiyle ortaya konulmuştur. Narrative terapi, insanların kimliklerini, kişiliklerini, hayatlarını ve ilişkilerini kendi oluşturdukları hikayeler aracılığıyla anlamaya çalışan postmodern bir terapi yaklaşımıdır. Bu yaklaşım hem bireylerin kendi hayat hikayelerine hem de kişisel ilişkilerine attıkları anlamları anlamayı önemsemektedir. Maneviyat ise bireylerin hikayelerinin bir parçası olarak onlara ve ilişkilerine anlam ve amaç katma noktasında etkin bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu nedenle maneviyat hem bireylerin hayatlarına hem de kişilerarası ilişkilere de kattığı anlamlarla narrative terapi çalışmalarında önemli bir yere sahiptir. Narrative terapi sadece bireylerin hikayelerine attıkları anlamları anlamakla yetinmeyip bu hikayeleri belli tekniklerle işlevsel bir biçimde yeniden yazmayı da vurgulamaktadır. Maneviyatla narrative terapi teknikleri yoluyla bireyin hikayesini yeniden yazma çalışmalarında önemli bir kaynak olarak rolü bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma narrative terapide maneviyatın rolüne vurgu yaparak hem narrative terapi literatürüne katkıda bulunacak hem de maneviyatın bu yaklaşımda nasıl kullanılabileceğine ilişkin bir perspektif sunacaktır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

maneviyat • narrative terapi • postmodern terapiler • derleme çalışması

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As a general definition, narrative therapy is a specific way of understanding individuals' identities, the problems they experience, how they experience these problems, and how these affect their lives (Morgan, 2000). Spirituality is one of the concepts that are addressable in narrative therapy, as it has a structure that shapes individual experiences and adds meaning to them. Although narrative therapy is not a spirituality-based approach and limited literature exists regarding how to deal with spirituality in this approach, narrative therapy can involve spirituality as it directly deals with the phenomenological areas of the individual. Narrative therapy studies individuals' beliefs within its scope related to spirituality and its functions, such as adding meaning and purpose to one's life (Coyle, 2014; McVeigh, 2016). In addition, narrative therapy focuses on interpersonal relationships, and spirituality has a great role in interpersonal relationships, as expressed in the definition of narrative therapy-based spirituality. Narrative therapy indirectly focuses on spirituality through people and their relationships with their environment, the meanings in these relationships (Coyle, 2014), and individuals' life goals (McVeigh, 2016). This review study will examine narrative therapy's perspective on spirituality, its relationship with spirituality, the use of spirituality in narrative therapy techniques, and what kind of process can be followed when working with spiritually or religious-oriented clients while re-authoring their stories, thus aiming to contribute to the existing literature in this way. However, the study needs to talk about the paradigm underlying this therapy approach before explaining the relationship between narrative therapy and spirituality because the principles of this paradigm provide a structure for how spirituality is handled within narrative therapy.

### **The Philosophical Foundations of Narrative Therapy**

Narrative therapy has positioned itself on a postmodern, post-structuralist, and social constructivist foundation (Tarragona, 2008). Taking a brief look at the principles advocated by modernism and the positivist paradigm that followed it will be useful before defining postmodernism and post-structuralism. When the positivist paradigm is used to explain any phenomenon or situation, it is done based on science and rational thought (Gergan, 1985). The main way to follow science and achieve rational thought is through empirical studies. This point of view is also reflected in the social sciences, and people have advocated the need for psychology to have an empirical basis (Abels, 2001) because, just like the laws of nature, the positivist paradigm assumes reality to be independent and unchanging regardless of the person observing it and that it can be measured objectively using quantitative methods. Meanwhile, postmodernism and the postmodern paradigm state that no single truth can be valid for all people, especially in social sciences (Abels, 2001), and that truth is a relative concept that changes according to one's point of view (Tarragona, 2008). Due to truth not being any single, concrete, tangible reality in the social sciences, no questioning occurs about discovering

objective realities (Abels, 2001), and every fact produced by the collective mind is open to question (Epstein, 1995). When considering this perspective, postmodernism sees the concept of subjectivity being replaced by objectivity, locality by universality, and relativity by certainty (Epstein, 1995).

The reflections of postmodernism can be seen in many fields such as art, philosophy, and architecture. In addition to these areas, reflections have also been seen in the field of psychology, as mentioned above. Narrative therapy and short-term solution-focused therapy are the products of these reflections, the explanation being that no absolute reality has emerged from trying to understand clients' realities in narrative therapy or in helping clients express the realities and meanings they have created (Morgan, 2000/2022; Neimeyer & Raskin, 2000).

Postmodern therapies have specific features (Tarragona, 2008). First of all, postmodern therapies give importance to the interdisciplinary perspective. Many studies on narrative therapy have occurred in which theology and narrative therapy have been studied together (Kwok, 2016; Marais, 2006). According to postmodern approaches and social constructivism, people's experiences and the meanings they attribute to these experiences are constructed as a result of social interactions (Tarragona, 2008). In connection with this definition, the focus in narrative therapy while studying spirituality is on the spiritual meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences as well as on the spiritual structures they create in their interpersonal relationships and the meanings within these structures (Béres, 2014). Postmodern therapies also give importance to context (Tarragona, 2008). Again, individuals' interactions with the people in their context has importance while studying spirituality in narrative therapy. For example, studies on spirituality show that the meanings clients attribute to the people who are important in their life and their relationships with these people can be studied when re-membering conversations (White, 2007). Another feature of postmodern therapies involves the therapist's position in the relationship (Tarragona, 2008). In narrative therapy, the therapist has a collaborative position in which therapy is not performed on the client, but rather the process is carried out with the client. Here, the therapist adopts a non-judgmental and non-blaming attitude. This attitude facilitates talking about sensitive subjects such as spirituality during therapy (McVeigh, 2016). In addition, the therapist has an unknown but influential position during therapy (Tarragona, 2008). The therapist's acceptance that the client is the expert of their own life can help the therapist understand the client. In postmodern approaches, the therapist attaches importance to clients' personal agency and accompanies them in solving the problem brought to the session by using the resources they have discovered (Tarragona, 2008). Listening to a client's story involves the structures that affect the client's personality, such as their religious and spiritual structures. Outsider witnesses are a concrete example of this situation in

narrative therapy (Morgan, 2000). Inviting the people or religious leaders to whom the client attaches spiritual importance to the session while working with spiritual structures is an example of the practice of outsider witnesses. Lastly in postmodern therapies, therapists focus on what works (Tarragona, 2008). For example, narrative therapy focuses on the times when no problems exist, and spirituality can be included in the process if it is a helpful resource.

In addition to the postmodern perspective, narrative therapy has positioned itself within social constructivism, as mentioned above (Doan, 1997; Neimeyer & Raskin, 2000). According to this theory, individuals are affected by the social structures they inhabit while creating their own reality, and the normative structures, discourses, and realities that have been previously put forward are questioned (Doan, 1997). An example of this questioning is the criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) that classify psychiatric diagnoses. For this reason, social constructivism focuses on lived experiences, namely the client's speech, perspectives, and perceptions. Social constructivism seeks to understand how these experiences are affected by the client's interactions with other people. For this reason, examining these social structures and even looking at how these structures come together falls within the scope of the social constructivist approach.

Because narrative therapy is also influenced by the post-structuralist approach, it has also naturally been influenced by theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jerome Bruner, and Barbara Meyerhoff (Combs & Freedman, 2004). According to structuralist theory, the main way to grasp a phenomenon is to discover its basic unchanging structures (Thomas, 2002). This approach has been reflected onto the social sciences as the discovery of the internal structures of people, families, societies, and cultures (Thomas, 2002). According to the post-structuralist approach, however, focusing on the stories that people prefer to tell is more essential than trying to understand individuals' deep structures or their real selves (Tarragona, 2008). Still, the principle regarding the unchangeability of individuals' internal structures is defended by structuralism and has found a response with the creation of alternative stories in narrative therapy through the effects of post-structuralism (Thomas, 2002). According to structuralism, deep structures or inner selves additionally shape the individual's life, while post-structuralism states that language, the interactions that people establish with each other, and the meanings that individuals attribute to their relationships and stories are important in shaping the individual's life (Thomas, 2002). For this purpose, in order to capture the meanings that the individual attributes to experiences through language, post-structuralism has taken up the concepts that form the basis of narrative therapy such as deconstruction, which is a basic concept of literary theory (Tarragona, 2008). Deconstruction states that reading a text in depth will undermine the principle of the unchangeability of meanings as advocated by structuralism. Therefore, deconstruction



can be used to shake the individual's established beliefs (Morgan, 2000/2022). Again, individuals' problems are not related to their inner selves according to post-structuralism as it emphasizes individual problems to be about their culture and collective past; externalizing conversations are one of the techniques located in narrative therapy with this approach (Thomas, 2002). Finally and as will be explained below, inviting outsider witnesses to the session as a therapeutic intervention is a reflection of the principle that individuals' identities are shaped as a result of their interactions with people outside of themselves (Thomas, 2002).

Due to how the handling of many concepts has changed with postmodernism, these changes have also been reflected onto the concepts of religion and spirituality. The use of concepts that are accepted as objective (e.g., God, religion, and reason) is no longer valid for explaining a phenomenon (Epstein, 1995). In other words, the individual's perspective toward religion and faith is the focus rather than the representation of objective truths (Alici, 2018). Based on postmodernism, the focus is on subjective life spirituality and subjective spirituality instead of the traditional approach to religion that legitimizes all that individuals live and experience; the former is inclined toward the individual's inner sources, approaches other religious and spiritual beings tolerantly with an eclectic understanding, is far removed from the notion that dogma and objective reality exist, focuses on individual experience rather than collectivity, is inclusive by emphasizing equal structures rather than hierarchical ones (Alici, 2018). This transformation states that individuals do not need a religious affiliation to work with spirituality in the field of psychotherapy. Today, many people no longer define themselves as religious but rather as individuals interested in spirituality (McVeigh, 2016).

### **Pioneers of Narrative Therapy**

The founders of narrative therapy are Michael White and David Epston. White is the administrator of the Dulwich Centre in Australia, and Epston is the administrator of the Family Therapy Centre in New Zealand (Payne, 2006). These two pioneers were influenced by postmodern paradigm, social psychology, anthropology, feminist theory, family therapies, and literary theory while establishing the narrative therapy approach (White, 1995a, as cited in Payne, 2006). *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (White & Epston, 1990) and *Maps of Narrative Practice* (White, 2007) are two books written by the authors that describe the basic philosophy of narrative therapy.

White and Epston began to follow each other's work beginning in the late 1970s (White, 2009). At this time, White was the editor of a journal and a well-known researcher in Australia. The paths of these two pioneering theorists crossed at the First Australian Family Therapy Conference in 1981, after which they started often consulting each other about their ideas in their therapies. The fact that the feminist

approach has been on the agenda since the 1980s affected these two men's thoughts, with gender roles, race, ethnicity, and the social effects of colonization have influenced the psychotherapy these theorists developed.

### **The Basic Concepts of Narrative Therapy**

To understand the general structure of narrative therapy, one must first understand the basic components that make up this approach. Narrative therapy is based on the postmodern, post-structuralist, and social constructivist philosophies and is a therapeutic approach that tries to understand people's identities, personalities, stories, and problems as well as the effects these problems have on their lives through the client's own narrative (Morgan, 2000; Tarragona, 2008). This approach has the understanding that an individual's life consists of storied patterns; while understanding their story is important, but firstly why the concept of story is emphasized should be understood and a definition made for this concept as implied in narrative therapy. Stories have held an important place in many cultures throughout history. They are structures that include societies' values, thought, and belief systems, keeping these systems and transferring them over generations; they contribute to the formation of individuals' identities and enable them to direct their own lives (Duvall & Béres, 2011). With this definition, the concept of story that occurs in narrative therapy means the client's individual stories that include their own belief systems, discourses, and values. People throughout their lives experience many interconnected events, situations, or experiences to which they attribute meaning, and their stories emerge as a result of the combination of these experiences (Morgan, 2000). This emerging story consists of a whole to which the client attributes meaning. During the therapy, the attempt is made to understand which experiences the client has brought together to create a whole story and what kind of a common meaning the client has attributed to these experiences. In short, narrative therapy brings together experiences that seem to be separate and unique from each other to create a holistic and richly defined story (Payne, 2006).

These stories have certain features. First of all, stories can become dominant in people's lives. As individuals gather together the experiences that resemble previous ones, the previous stories they created intensify and become dominant as a result (Morgan, 2000). Stories that have become dominant are remembered deeply and are powerful and effective at directing the individual's current life (Abels, 2001). For example, selectively remembering and recounting the misfortunes that had happened to the client while they describe their experiences of being an unlucky person will make this story dominant for them. Dominant stories portray individuals' present situation and provides clues about their future (Morgan, 2000).

Although the individual tells the dominant aspects of their life story, some parts may have been forgotten or remain inconspicuous or in the background (Abels,

2001). These untold parts may contain the strengths the client needs to rewrite their own story. Individuals can sometimes tell their dominant stories in a problem-focused way that contains intensely negative emotions, houses a single point of view, is free from the complex structure of the story itself, and ignores the above-mentioned strengths (Morgan, 2000; Payne, 2006). This is called a problem-saturated description (i.e., poor description). A poor description of the story highlights the client's powerlessness, inadequacy, and worthlessness, and resultantly weakens the client's strength (Morgan, 2000). A client who describes themselves as unlucky is an example of a poor description. As the client brings together their experiences with these descriptions, they overlook the times when they were not unlucky, and a story filled with poor descriptions becomes dominant as a result.

Meanwhile, alternative stories are those that are created to counter dominant stories and to reduce the impact a dominant story has on the individual's life (Morgan, 2000). These stories enable the client to review themselves and their relationships and offer new possibilities for solving problems. After creating alternative stories, rich descriptions of these stories should be made (Morgan, 2000). Richly defined stories contain details, exceptions, and unique outcomes and allow the client to view the story from other perspectives. Once the alternative stories emerge, the client can now take a new position in the face of the problem (Payne, 2006). The client will either continue to maintain the problem-focused story or enter the process of change within the scope of the alternative story.

Therapists approach clients' dominant stories from a deconstructive point of view (Morgan, 2000/2022). The deconstructive perspective is used to identify the beliefs, thoughts, and understandings that contribute to the problem. These involve the general assumptions society makes within the framework of a common understanding and are considered to be certain. They have a structure that is not questioned because individuals take them for granted. Here, narrative therapy draws attention to these thoughts, questioning and drawing attention to how they contribute to the problem the client has brought. At the end of the process, the thoughts that had been taken for granted now become questionable, and awareness of how they direct the client's story has been provided.

During narrative therapy, the purpose is shaped around the client's story. The aim of narrative therapy is to create alternative stories by re-authoring the client's dominant but dysfunctional stories and reducing the effects the problem-focused story has on their personality (Tarragona, 2008). In addition, narrative therapy views the problem independently of the client and in the process helps clients look at themselves independent of the problem (Etchison & Kleist, 2000). The change at which narrative therapy is aimed also begins with the client seeing themselves as separate from the problem and participating in the intended process of change by

behaving differently, resisting the problem, or acting in cooperation with it through alternative stories (White & Epston, 1990, as cited in Etchison & Kleist, 2000, p. 61).

As mentioned above, narrative therapy involves the client telling and structuring their own stories. In this process, clients are the experts of their own lives (Abels, 2001; Morgan, 2000). According to Morgan (2000), clients know what their problems mean to them and have the personal agency and actability to overcome this problem because the client is believed to have had experience with overcoming similar problems previously in their lives. As an expert, the client has the strength and psychological resilience to deal with their own problems.

### **Spirituality in Narrative Therapy**

Establishing the relationship between narrative therapy and spirituality will provide a framework both for integrating the basic concepts explained above with the concept of spirituality as well as for using narrative therapy techniques with spiritually or religious-oriented clients. Two ways exist for trying to understand spirituality in narrative therapy. The first of these is to examine White's perspective on spirituality as the founder of narrative therapy, and the second is to try and understand how spirituality is positioned within narrative therapy. According to White (2000, as cited in Béres, 2014, pp. 114-115), three different definitions and interpretations exist for the idea of spirituality. Firstly, spirituality has an ascendant aspect. Spirituality here is related to the supreme, the divine, and the holy (McVeigh, 2016) and means that the individual respects the being they regard as sacred and directs their own life in line with it. Secondly, spirituality is immanent and related to the essence of humankind (White, 2000, as cited in Béres, 2014, p. 115). Spiritual experiences here are more internal, deeper, and self-directed. According to this definition, humans have their own true aspects, and the truer a person can be, the more they can experience spirituality. In short, this type of spirituality is related to how the individual experiences their true self and reflects these aspects as they are (McVeigh, 2016). Lastly, spirituality can have both transcendent and immanent aspects (White, 2000, as cited in Béres, 2014, p. 115). The more the individual gets in touch and connects with their own essence, the more they can relate to the transcendent God. In other words, spirituality involves both an ascendant being as well as the selves of those with whom individuals come in contact (McVeigh, 2016).

These definitions as explained above relate to the intangible and invisible aspects of spirituality (McVeigh, 2016). However, White's definition of spirituality differs from the versions above, which can be heard in his own words as follows (White, 2000, as cited in McVeigh, 2016, p. 132):

*When I talk of spirituality I am not appealing to the Divine or the holy. And I am not saluting human nature, whatever that might be, if it exists at all. The notion of spirituality that I am*

*relating to is one that makes it possible for me to see and to appreciate the visible in people's lives, not the invisible... it is a spirituality that has to do with relating to one's material options in a way that one becomes more conscious of one's own knowing.*

White draws attention to how spirituality is related not to the invisible but to the visible. What appears in man is his/her material existence, that is, man's conscious self-knowledge. Such spirituality is associated with one's own way of being and thoughts. While explaining the visible part of spirituality, he draws attention to the sacred signs of the existence of individuals in daily life (White, 2000, as cited in McVeigh, 2016). According to White (2000, as cited in Béres, 2014), the individual's realization of the signs of their own sacredness in daily life can create a sacred space in their experiences because a sacred aspect exists within the person themselves. This area can be used for therapeutic purposes during the therapy. In other words, when considering the importance that narrative therapy gives to narratives that are ignored or unspoken in daily life, having the client capture the spiritual signs of their own existence in their daily life may lead to the formation of a new experience and language during therapy, thus creating alternative stories (McVeigh, 2016).

After understanding White's perspective on spirituality, the study can now discuss how spirituality has been positioned within narrative therapy. Spirituality can be handled in different ways in narrative therapy. The first of these involves spirituality's position with regard to constructing meaning in narrative therapy. The relationship between narrative therapy and spirituality is about creating meaning in the individual's life and enriching this meaning (Truter & Kotzé, 2005). According to Canda's (1988) study, the definition of spirituality upon which narrative therapy is based involves humans' search for meaning within themselves, and this meaning is sought in relationships that are mutually nourished with non-human structures and with God. According to Marais (2006), another definition that supports this defines spirituality as the process of creating meaning in life's relationship with the divine and the transcendent. The purpose of narrative therapy within the framework of these definitions is to focus on people's stories, to try to understand the meanings they derive from these stories, to support individuals in creating their perspectives according to their own meanings, and to ensure that these perspectives are suitable for their own meanings and purposes (Béres, 2014). One of the aims of narrative therapy is to help individuals create new meanings and new life goals and, as a result, create new hopes and possibilities in their lives (McVeigh, 2016). Narrative therapy also deals with spirituality at the point of creating new meaning and life purpose, because spirituality has a role in shaping individuals' actions and experiences (Coyle, 2014).

Another position of spirituality involves how it emerges in interpersonal relationships and gives meaning to these relationships. Narrative therapy under the influence of social constructivist theory cares about interpersonal relationships, and

some of the intervention techniques involve relationships with others. Some of the definitions of spirituality upon which narrative therapy has been based emphasize the spiritual aspects in interpersonal relationships. Studies conducted with therapists who've adopted a narrative orientation in the literature have also shown the therapist's perspective on spirituality to again be shaped by relationships. For example, one study conducted with four therapists who defined themselves as narrative therapists defined spirituality as the "sacred art of relationships" (McVeigh, 2016, p. 7). According to Crisp (2010, as cited in Béres, 2014, p. 113), who provided another definition of spirituality on which narrative therapy is based, spirituality means being aware of the relationship with the other (God, divine beings, other people). Awareness of having a relationship with others helps one understand and make sense of one's needs, desires, and experiences and enables one to experience the concepts of meaning, identity, connectivity, transformation, and transcendence, which are the concepts covered by spirituality. Griffith (2002, p. 15) also described spirituality in a way that also supports Crisp's definition:

*Spirituality is a commitment to choose, as the primary context for understanding and acting, one's relatedness with all that is. With this commitment, one attempts to stay focused on relationships between oneself and other people, the physical environment, one's heritage and traditions, one's body, one's ancestors, saints, Higher Power, or God. It places relationships at the centre of awareness, whether they be interpersonal relationships with the world or other people, or intrapersonal relationships with God or other nonmaterial beings.*

As can be understood from these two definitions, spirituality contributes to the client's life in terms of giving meaning and purpose (Béres, 2014). This contribution is sometimes obtained as a result of relationships established with God, sometimes with other people, and sometimes through other animate or inanimate beings. Narrative therapy by its nature focuses on this meaning and therefore on established relationships. Within the scope of this definition, narrative therapy at present focuses on spirituality by focusing on one's relationship with oneself, with other people, and even with people who are no longer alive (McVeigh, 2016). Narrative therapy focuses on the individual's relationship with their own body, ancestors, religious leaders, or divine power, as well as the spiritual structures contained in these relationships (i.e., meanings) with the methods and techniques it uses (e.g., re-membering conversations).

Regarding the relational position of spirituality in narrative therapy, Carlson and Ericson (2000) talked about the concept of relational identity and stated that individuals do not create their own identity story on their own; on the contrary, the relationship they establish with the creator is also effective when creating this identity story. The relationships they value in their lives have important places in the formation of the individual's dominant identity story, and the relationship established with God is therefore important for individuals who care about the religious/spiritual structure.

In short, the relationship one establishes with God is important in forming one's own identity. Narrative therapy sessions reveal the individual's relational identity story with the creator, and for this reason, the individual is asked about their perception regarding how God views them during the sessions. If the individual's relationship with the God is empowering, this can be used as a resource for the client to cope with their problems (Marais, 2006).

One's relationship with the God being a resource is also suitable to the nature of narrative therapy. Narrative therapy focuses on individual strengths and values and focuses on revealing the resources that support the individual in establishing good relations with themselves and their environment (McVeigh, 2016). These resources may also involve resources such as religion or spirituality that support the client in establishing good relationships. The main focus in this approach is about discovering the resources the client values and adding meaning and purpose in life; these are the resources that nurture strengths rather than feed the problem or pathology. According to narrative therapy, spirituality is a relational resource (Carlson et al., 2002).

An example of both one's relationship with God and the meaning this relationship has can be given in terms of a narrative therapy session with a client suffering from heart disease. In an interview with the heart patient client, the client included God's voice in his narrations as well as what God could tell him about what the client had achieved during the treatment process. In this way, the client had the opportunity to see himself through God's eyes (Truter & Kotzé, 2005). God's approval of the client's achievements led to the emergence of a power that enlivened the client's life. These conversations were used to reveal the role and meaning of one's relationship with God in the client's life.

### **The Use of Narrative Therapy Techniques with a Spiritual Framework**

According to narrative therapy, spirituality is used with the intention of revealing the meaning and purpose of the client's life. Therefore, instead of directly asking the client religious questions, the preference may be to ask questions about situations that reveal the meaning and purpose of the client's life (Béres, 2014). Although narrative therapy does not offer a direct technique for dealing with spirituality, it does cover spirituality with its perspective and therapeutic techniques and touches upon the client's spiritual aspects (McVeigh, 2016). This section will provide information on how to use narrative therapy techniques when working with spiritually or religious-oriented clients.

#### ***The Externalization Technique***

When clients first start their therapy sessions, they come to sessions with internalized problems (Morgan, 2000). For example, a client may say, "I am a

depressed person.” However, narrative therapy looks at the problem outside of the clients (Morgan, 2000). The problem is externalized from the client with questions such as “How does depression affect your life?” The aims here are to separate the client’s identity from the problem and to gain the perspective where the cause of the problem is not the client’s own personality (Payne, 2006). This technique asks the client to give a name to the problem they are experiencing (Tarragona, 2008). For example, when working with a client experiencing anxiety, the client may call this worry a negative voice (Morgan, 2000/2022).

The client’s internalization of the problem damages the client’s self-confidence and result in self-blame, and externalizing the problem protects the client from these negative consequences (Nichols, 2013). Another purpose for using the externalization technique is to emphasize how the client has a structure that is not only affected by the problem but that also affects the problem (Akkuş et al., 2020), because the client believes they are unable to affect a problem that has been internalized and attributed to their personality.

Externalization techniques can be used directly in session while studying spirituality, and questions may be asked about how the externalized problem has affected the client’s spirituality or the spirituality of the relationships they’ve established. For example, a client named Carol externalized her problem as self-doubt during her narrative therapy sessions and talked about how these doubts had reflected on both her relationship with her partner and her relationship with God (Marais, 2006). In the context of this case, the client was asked the following questions with regard to externalizing the conversations in order to understand how doubt has affected the spirituality in her relationships: “How do you think your self-doubt affects the way you perceive your relationship with God? How do you think your self-doubt is affecting your conversations with God about this problem? What would be your self-doubt if you could look at your relationship with God from a different perspective?” (p. 78).

### ***Deconstruction Questions***

This technique allows clients to look at their own story from different perspectives and can also be instrumental in shaking clients’ established beliefs by enabling them to see the shortcomings of their story (Morgan, 2000/2022). However, in order for clients to look at and analyze the problem from different perspectives, they first need to see the problem as separate from themselves. For example, in a group study with female clients who were dissatisfied with their body image, the problem was first externalized, and then social and cultural factors affecting body image were discussed (Duba et al., 2010). This discussion clearly cannot be had if clients see themselves as the problem.



Deconstruction helps client show how they have dealt with their beliefs in a limited framework by helping to discover and expand these beliefs (McVeigh, 2016). For example, a therapist asked a client who felt that God was punishing her for sexual abuse over which she had had no control, “Do you think God is punishing you for things you have no control over?” (p. 67). With deconstruction questions, clients can look at spirituality that they had defined as problematic from different perspectives and even finds different ways to express spirituality. Thus, narrative therapists can examine the thoughts of clients who define spirituality as destructive and encourage them to focus on the aspects of spirituality that improve their life.

### ***Unique Outcomes***

Unique outcomes can be defined as exceptional situations in the client’s dominant story; namely, situations that contradict the story (Morgan, 2000). In narrative therapy, clients has a dominant story, but sometimes this dominant story does not affect them (Tarragona, 2008). The therapist addresses these moments, captures unique results, learns their meaning for the client, and begins to create alternative stories based on these results. Unique results produce a new exit door for clients (Payne, 2006). To achieve unique results, the therapist may ask questions such as “Can you describe a time when this problem did not arise?” or “What does it mean for you to have had no tantrums over the weekend? What does this tell us about you?” These questions can be used to determine exceptional situations and how clients make sense of these situations (Payne, 2006).

After discovering unique outcomes in the therapy process, what these mean for the client is determined (Morgan, 2000/2022). This determination is made by asking the client what are called identity questions. These questions involve targeting the definitions of spirituality upon which narrative therapy is based, as they are aimed at the client’s personal values, the qualities of the relationships they have with people, and their beliefs. For example, “What personal values is this behavior based on?” (Morgan, 2000/2022, p. 82) is one question that serves to make sense of the unique outcomes that appeal to personal values. “How would you describe your relationship with John when this happened?” (Morgan, 2000/2022, p. 82) is another question that serves to make sense of the unique outcomes that address relationship attributes. Finally, “What does doing this say about you as a person?” (Morgan, 2000/2022, p. 83) is another question that serves to make sense of the unique outcomes that appeal to personal qualities. When looking at the narrative therapy-based definition of spirituality, these questions involve addressing both the clients’ contact with themselves and how they interpret the relationships they have with others. Thus, these questions are used to get in touch with the client’s spiritual aspects.

Unique outcomes are achieved mainly by asking about when the dominant story does not take place in the individual’s life. For example, a woman who had a problem

with her husband because of infidelity explained that God had not helped herself but had allowed her to see her husband's unfaithfulness so she had become angry at God (Karris & Arger, 2019). In the sessions, the therapist tried to understand if she had had experiences in which God had helped her, the meaning of God's help to her, and the meanings of unique outcomes.

### ***Finding What Is Absent but Implicit in the Narrative***

When people describe their experiences, they describe them by comparing them with other experiences (Freedman, 2012). Explained more concretely, when someone describes a problematic experience, they compare it to a non-problematic experience. A therapist who applies the double listening method as described by White (2003) at this point will actually be able to touch upon the points the client prefers and values by seeing the basis of the story as well as the problem story as told by the client (Freedman, 2012). These points may not be explicitly included in the client's narrative, but they will appear indirectly in the client's experiences. For example, the psychological suffering that a client talks about in a session is related to certain goals, values, and beliefs; despair regarding dreams about the future may indicate the client conceptually perceiving the world as unjust, or abandonment and desolation may indicate the client to highly value spirituality or cultural virtues (Freedman, 2012; White, 2003).

When clients bring spiritual issues to the session and present these issues or their relationships as a problem, the basis, purpose, values, beliefs, dreams, and expectations behind the problem can be revealed using the double listening technique. For example, the subject of infidelity was studied with a couple (Sarah and David) in a narrative therapy session, and the female client had also become angry with God because of this infidelity because she thought that God had allowed this trauma (Karris & Arger, 2019). When the therapist listened to the female client's anger toward God with the double listening technique, the therapist tried to understand the client's beliefs, expectations, and perceptions of God behind this anger. To this end, the therapist asked the client the following questions: "Sarah, you are clearly in great pain. What do you think about God's feelings for you right now? How did you learn that God controls every event and action that happens? Sarah, you said God allowed this happen to you. What do you mean by allow? Do you think God can't let that happen?" (Karris & Arger, 2019, p. 10). These questions are among the ones a narrative therapist can ask in order to listen to a client with the double listening method and were used here to then reveal Sarah's beliefs, expectations, and hopes about God in the background.

### ***Re-Authoring Conversations***

As stated in the article's section on the basic concepts of narrative therapy, the narrative therapy process is used to start writing alternative stories in response to the

problem-focused story (Carey & Russell, 2003). Alternative stories are stories that the client prefers to experience when they have no problems in their life (Morgan, 2000/2022). The re-authoring process begins when the therapist captures any experience that conflict with the dominant story (Carey & Russell, 2003). After this experience is captured, the therapist names it together with the client and make a rich definition (Morgan, 2000/2022). Afterward, the therapist connects this story to the other stories that contradict the dominant story, and thus an alternative story chain begins to form (Carey & Russell, 2003). For example, in the story of the female client who was angry with God and felt worthless because of the problems she'd experienced, the therapist captured the experiences that were deemed valuable by God, and the alternative story of the client began to be written by making a rich description of these experiences. While re-authoring conversations are in the hands of the therapist, they act on the principle that the client's life does not consist of a single dominant story but of multiple stories; therefore, alternative stories can be written as well as problem-saturated stories (Carey & Russell, 2003).

### ***Re-membering Conversations***

This technique is a concept that anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff (1982, as cited in Carlson & Erickson, 2000, p. 240) brought to the literature as “the aggregation of members, the figures who belong to one's life story, one's own prior selves, as well as significant others who are part of the story.” These people are important figures in the life story of the individual and have a function in shaping the individual's personality, identity, and life (White, 2007). During the therapy, the relationships with these figures in the individual's life story are reviewed, with the influence of some figures in their own life being increased and others eliminated.

Spirituality can be worked through using re-membering questions. For example, questions such as “What would God say about your coping ability, your ability to handle things right now?” (McVeigh, 2016, p. 66) or “What would your grandmother say if she were here right now?” (p. 67) are concrete examples of how to work on spirituality in narrative therapy, both by referring to the client's relationship with the transcendent and by asking about a relationship that is not currently in the client's life but has spiritual importance.

An example of re-membering conversations can be given from a client going through a narrative therapy session (Marais, 2006). The re-membering conversations technique was applied to a client who doubted himself and did not believe in his own strength. He'd included the Prophet Moses, who was a part of his own beliefs, in these conversations. According to the information in the New Testament, Prophet Moses had also doubted himself, and the client compared his process to that of Moses, explaining it by saying, “Moses lost faith in himself, just as I did, but God Almighty

showed us otherwise. We are strong.” (Marais, 2006, p. 87). That the client made this sentence has an important place in the context of re-membering conversations, because many common points, similarities, and connections with the members of the client’s life story emerge in these conversations (Morgan, 2000/2022).

### ***Outsider Witnesses***

Narrative therapy may involve others apart from the therapist and the client who have witnessed the client’s dominant or rewritten story during the therapy process (Payne, 2006). These people may be the client’s friends, family members, or people who do not know the client, such as other therapists or people from the society to which the client belongs (Morgan, 2000). The feature these people have is that they listen to the client tell their story from behind a one-sided mirror in the therapist’s room and reflect their own observations about this story (Payne, 2006). After outsider witnesses listen to the client’s story and reflect their own observations about this story, the client can also express their own thoughts or respond to these projections (Morgan, 2000). Thus, the client has the chance to look at his own story from different angles by having it be retold by others (Payne, 2006).

Outsider witnesses can be used in two different ways regarding spirituality during narrative therapy. First, religious/spiritual figures who have strong influences on the alternative story the client has created can be invited to the sessions. Having these figures listen to the client’s alternative story and reflect on this story can be productive for the therapeutic process. Secondly, because spirituality in narrative therapy is about being aware of the other and the process of creating meaning in the relationships the individual has established with others, the client can gain awareness of what they care about in their relationships and what is meaningful to them through the reflections of outsider witnesses (Morgan, 2000/2022). One example can be given here from Morgan’s (2000) book, where Alex as an outsider witness at a therapy session is able to comment as he listens to Josie’s story:

*When Josie was talking, I noticed she said that it was a relief to trust her mum with that piece of information. I was wondering more about what lead up to her being able to trust her mother like she did? And what that says about what Josie wants or is committed to in her relationship with her mother? I was wondering what this commitment might mean for their relationship and what Josie thinks about that? (p. 123)*

In this example, Alex’s reflections may be a reflection on what Josie cares about and gives meaning to in her interpersonal relationships, in addition to the definition of spirituality.

### ***Therapeutic Documents***

Letters, certificates, and diplomas are documents used as a narrative therapeutic method to increase the effectiveness of sessions and strengthen the client's story (Tarragona, 2008; White, 2007). For example, a certificate of achievement given to the client for a situation they had overcome or a letter from the therapist to the client can be considered therapeutic documents. Narrative letters, estimation letters, invitation letters, counter referral letters (dedicated to the person who referred the client to therapy) are other examples (Bjørøy et al., 2016). These documents enable the client to see their own progress (Payne, 2006), the participating outsider witnesses to observe the process, and hope for the future with success certificates (Bjørøy et al., 2016).

Therapeutic documents are important resources for studying spirituality in narrative therapy. For example, the issue of infidelity had been studied in a narrative therapy session between the previously mentioned clients, David and Sarah, and attempt was made to repair the relationship between the partners (Karris & Arger, 2019). The partners prepared a therapeutic document during the session that included how they were at the beginning of the session and how God had helped rewrite their story afterwards. This newly written story revealed a resilient, strong, healing, and hopeful relationship between the couples. The partners wrote the features of this newly written relationship story as a therapeutic document and even read it to outsider witnesses who'd come to the session. In the next session, the couple even wrote a statement with the therapist and hung it on their walls in their home. The title of this statement reflects the couple's therapy process: "Resilience, Healing, & Hope." This example shows how the use of therapeutic documents is functional in reinforcing the client's alternative story while studying spirituality in sessions.

### **The Therapist's Position and Relationship with Spirituality**

Narrative therapy is not only limited to spirituality and techniques in its approach but also brings some suggestions regarding the therapist's relationship with spirituality. Narrative therapy addresses the relationship between the therapist's position and spirituality on two points. Firstly, clients may be in a sensitive position when applying for therapy and during the first phase of the therapeutic alliance with their therapist (McVeigh, 2016). In this sensitive position, clients do not want to be judged. On the contrary, they expect to feel safe and unconditionally accepted by their therapist. In addition, they may have difficulty talking about some subjects such as spirituality. While focusing on spirituality in the sessions, the therapist should show a respectful, non-directing, and non-judgmental attitude and open up room for the client to talk about religious/spiritual issues (Marais, 2006; McVeigh, 2016). Viewing the client as the expert of their own life (Tarragona, 2008), which was mentioned in the section on the characteristics of postmodern therapies, helps a therapist working with spiritual

issues to establish a more equal, respectful and non-directing relationship with their client. Respecting the client while talking about spirituality issues is one of the main perspectives of narrative therapy, and in order to do this and ensure that the client does not feel any coercion or pressure from the therapist, the therapist can ask the client questions such as “Is it appropriate for you to talk about this issue? Would you like to talk about this? Would you like to continue talking about this topic?” (McVeigh, 2016).

Secondly, studies have also addressed therapists’ own personal stances toward spirituality. The therapist’s spirituality can be an important resource in the relationship with the client (Carlson et al., 2002). However, the prevailing view in the literature is that the therapist’s spiritual aspects should remain separate from their professional work. This view is opposed by postmodern-oriented thinkers. Just as with clients, spirituality adds meaning and purpose to the therapist’s life. Carlson et al. (2002) stated therapists’ professional lives and spirituality to be interrelated. Spirituality is a source of strength for therapists, as it provides them with hope and a safe and calm foundation. This source also has importance in the relationship between therapists and their clients. For this reason, a therapist’s spirituality and professional identity have been stated to be inseparable from one another, for if these two sides are separated, many functional aspects about the therapist may be lost during the therapy.

### **The Case**

A 23-year-old male client applied for therapy due to the negative events he’d experienced in his life. These negativities mostly involved the problems the client had with his parents. During the therapy, the therapist first determined the subject to work on by asking, “Is it appropriate for you to examine this subject? Would you like to talk about this subject?” The therapist and client determined the subject to be examined in the therapy to be anger. Firstly, the therapist externalized the experienced anger during the therapy. The client gave this anger the name of cloud. While naming the problem, the definition of this cloud was simultaneously made. The therapist asked externalizing questions about his characteristics and how these had affected the client’s life and relationships. When the client mentioned how the anger he’d experienced had affected his relationship with God, the therapist asked the questions “How do you think the cloud affects your relationship with God” and “What would happen to the cloud if you could look at your relationship with God from a different angle?” The therapist then identified the times when the client’s anger issues had not affected him and revealed the unique results. In order to achieve unique results, the therapist also examined the client’s history by asking, “Can you talk about a time when the cloud did not appear? How have your relationships changed during these times? What does this mean to you?” The client stated that when the cloud did

not visit him, he had been able to remain more functional in his life and establish healthier relationships with his parents and God.

Due to the fact that the client cared about his relationship with God but had negative attitudes toward this relationship, the therapist tried to look at this situation from different angles with the client and used deconstruction questions throughout the process while examining the client's relationship with God. When the client stated thinking that God had done him an injustice, the therapist asked him, "You said that God was unfair to you. What does being unfair mean to you? How did you learn that God can do an injustice to people? Do you think that God cannot allow this to happen? Could God have prevented these problems from happening?" Thus, the client tried to look at his relationship with God, which he'd defined as problematic, from different perspectives. In addition, the client expressed the hopes, expectations, and dreams that he wanted from his relationship with God.

After these questions, the concepts of benefit and injustice were emphasized with regard to the negative life events the client had expressed, and thus began the writing of the alternative story. While discussing the concept of benefit, the client mentioned how these negative events had made him stronger toward life, how he had realized his skills for coping with problems, and how he was the source of power. Discussions occurred regarding how he could benefit from this power source when he encounters negative events in his future life. When the client talked about the concepts of injustice, the therapist emphasized this concept, and they discussed how this concept has an important value for the client and how the client can develop fair relations in the future.

When talking about the client's source of power, the client brought up the subject of his teacher, who had an important place in his life, stating how the teacher had always supported him throughout his school years. As the client remembered this teacher in the sessions, this teacher became included in the re-remembering conversations again. The therapist asked, "If your teacher were here right now, what would they say about your situation?" According to the client, the answers his teacher would give would consist of appreciation for his coping skills and guidance on how he could look at his relationships by putting aside his anger.

In order to enrich the client's alternative story, the client's father and siblings were invited to a narrative therapy session, during which the client talked about his power sources. The client's brother, who'd had a similar experience as he, also stated being able to similarly benefit from the sources the client had mentioned; the brother also mentioned having previously felt powerless at overcoming this difficult experience but that after listening to his brother, he realized that he also could have sources of power. Later when discussing the client's reflections, the client stated that setting an

example in this way has been good for him and honored him. In another session, the client wrote a letter to God as a therapeutic document in which how God helped him to discover his power sources and find his new “selves.” The client said he’d called it a thank you letter because if he’d not experienced this event, maybe he would not have discovered the stronger sides of his personality.

### **Conclusion**

Alongside the changes in the positivist paradigm that have dominated the scientific world since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the effects from the postmodern paradigm have also reflected themselves onto the field of psychotherapy and then narrative therapy, and solution-focused therapy approaches appeared in the field of psychology (Tarragona, 2008). While the basic philosophy is being questioned regarding which paradigm shifts the existing therapeutic approaches are based on, this questioning has not only remained within this framework, but also the handling of spirituality-related concepts has also begun to change. The current focus is on the subjective perception of the individual instead of the concepts of religion/spirituality, which are determined objectively and seen as the representation of objective truths (Alici, 2018). What has remained important after this process is how clients perceive spirituality, what meanings they attribute to it, where they position it in their own life, and how spirituality functions in the formation of relationships and in individuals’ own identity. Narrative therapy places spirituality in this framework; in other words, the function of spirituality is to create meaning and purpose in individuals’ lives and to carry this meaning and purpose to their interpersonal relationships (Béres, 2014). The meaning of spirituality in people’s individual stories, its meaning in their interpersonal relationships, and its role and function in the alternative stories it will create fall within the field of narrative therapy.

Due to narrative therapy not being an approach based on the concept of spirituality, limited studies are found in the literature explaining this relationship. Therefore, this study has a limited number of resources while explaining its theoretical and conceptual framework. However, the theoretical background presented in this study is predicted to contribute to the very limited literature addressing spirituality in narrative therapy and to also create a conceptual and theoretical perspective for researchers who want to work in this field. Thus, future research, researchers, and practitioners are thought to be able to contribute to this limited body of literature by combining the theoretical background in this study with their own practices. In parallel with this theoretical background, the intervention techniques used in narrative therapy are suitable for working with spirituality. For example, spirituality may be discovered through unique results to have an empowering function in clients’ lives (if such a function exists for a client but has not yet been discovered). With re-remembering conversations, clients can include the voices of the people to whom they attribute spiritual meaning in their life. Similarly, people who



add spiritual meaning to the client's life can be invited to session through the outsider witness practices. This application-oriented information aims to provide practitioners with more holistic and comprehensive interventions for evaluating clients with strong spiritual/religious orientations. In addition, practitioners who adhere to different schools of therapy will still be able to integrate these practical techniques into their own practices when working with spiritually or religious-oriented clients. As a result, although narrative therapy is not a spirituality-based one, it can work with spirituality functionally due to its focus on interpersonal relationships and the meanings in these relationships.

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Original Article

# The Role of Spirituality in Existential Confrontation with a Case Study

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## Abstract

This study deals with existential psychotherapy from the perspective of Rollo May and Irvin Yalom; it includes the concepts of death, freedom, meaning, responsibility, and loneliness. Furthermore, an existential approach is an approach that cares about cultural sensitivity and works with its clients from this perspective. When it comes to sensitivity to culture, it is almost impossible not to talk about religion and spirituality. Spirituality has been an increasingly found field in literature in recent years. In addition, it is an indisputable fact that the spiritual resources of the client should be investigated, the spiritual and religious dimensions of the clients should be studied in the psychological counseling process, and sustainable coping mechanisms should be developed. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are insufficient studies on how to deal with spirituality in the psychological counseling process in terms of existential theory. For this reason, this study aims to address the perspectives of existentialist philosophers on spirituality, to reveal the relationship between spirituality and existential psychology, to bring a spiritual perspective to existential psychological counseling processes on this ground, and to offer technical and process suggestions to the field workers. For this purpose, relevant literature information, existential spiritually oriented counseling principles and techniques, evaluations, suggestions in the conclusion, a case example, and formulations of this case are included in the study. With the given titles, a unique perspective is presented to spiritually oriented counseling practices from an existential perspective, and existential techniques are adapted to the culture.

## Keywords:

Existential psychotherapy • spirituality • psychological counseling

## Vaka Örneği ile Varoluşsal Yüzleşmelerde Maneviyatın Rolü

## Öz

Varoluşçu psikoterapiyi Rollo May ve Irvin Yalom bakış açısı ile ele alan bu çalışma; ölümlü, özgürlük, anlam, sorumluluk ve yalnızlık kavramlarını barındırmaktadır. Ayrıca varoluşçu yaklaşım kültüre duyarlılığı önemseyen ve danışanları ile bu perspektiften çalışan bir yaklaşımdır. Kültüre duyarlılık söz konusu olduğunda din ve maneviyatın söz konusu olmaması hemen hemen olanaksızdır. Maneviyat kavramı ise son yıllarda artan şekilde kendisine literatürde yer bulmaktadır. Ayrıca danışanın manevi kaynaklarının araştırılması, danışanların manevi ve dini boyutlarının psikolojik danışmanlık sürecinde çalışılması ve sürdürülebilir baş etme mekanizmalarının geliştirilmesi gerekliliği su götürmez bir gerçektir. Alan yazın incelendiğinde varoluşçu kuram açısından özellikle maneviyatın psikolojik danışmanlık sürecinde nasıl ele alınacağı ile ilgili çalışmaların yetersiz olduğu görülmektedir. Bu sebeple bu çalışmada; varoluşçu filozofların maneviyata bakış açılarını ele almak, maneviyat ve varoluşçu psikoloji ilişkisini ortaya koymak, bu zeminde varoluşçu psikolojik danışmanlık süreçlerine manevi bir bakış açısı getirmek, ve alan çalışanlarına bu konuda teknik ve süreç önerileri sunmak amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaca yönelik olarak çalışmanın içerisinde ilgili literatür bilgilerine, varoluşçu manevi yönelimli psikolojik danışma ilke ve tekniklerine, sonuç kısmında değerlendirme ve önerilere, bir vaka örneğine ve bu vakanın formülasyonlarına yer verilmiştir. Verilen başlıklarla manevi yönelimli psikolojik danışma uygulamalarına varoluşçu perspektiften özgün bir bakış açısı sunulmaktadır ve varoluşçu tekniklerin kültüre uyarlanmış hali yer almaktadır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler:

Varoluşçu psikoterapi • maneviyat • psikolojik danışma

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Since the day human descended to the earth, human has asked questions about his/her existence and tried to understand why they exist. This questioning process has brought with it concepts such as loneliness, the search for meaning, and responsibility. This philosophical process, in which questions, not answers, arise and gain meaning, has been the subject of existential philosophy in terms of the subjects it deals with. Thinkers who questioned existentialism contributed to the development of existential philosophy. In the following lines, existential philosophy, existentialist philosophers, and the philosophical history of existentialism will be explained to better understand the existential psychotherapy processes.

The human being is a being thrown into this world. Humans must face the things they will experience and the annihilation that their existence brings them (Heidegger, 2019). This confrontation process raises many questions. To talk about existentialism, it will be necessary to talk about existence first. According to existential thinkers, the words to be, to exist and to be in the moment do not have the same meaning. A thing can only show its existence when it finds a response in the mental world. However, it is almost impossible to question the existence and reach a clear conclusion, since a person cannot go to a field other than this mental comprehension. In other words, to question and think about existence, it is necessary to look at the thing that is thought from a certain distance, but since he cannot put this distance on anything whose existence is questioned, there cannot be an objective questioning. Everything whose existence is questioned certainly carries a piece of the questioner (Foulque, 1995; Taşdelen, 2004; Yalom, 2011). In summary, nothing in which existential inquiries are made can be independent of one's way of evaluating the world.

The existing process is also the concept that distinguishes human existence, which means consciousness, spirit, freedom, and self, from other beings in terms of existence. According to Heidegger, a lonely human who is in the middle of existence, thanks to this loneliness meaning, builds the existence area where he belongs. (Taşdelen, 2004). The process of a human trying to understand his/her existence in the face of the real world; is described as an experience in the books *The Stranger* written by Camus and *Nausea* written by Sartre. Human experiences existential crisis with loneliness and alienation (Camus, 2019; Sartre, 2019). Heidegger, on the other hand, defines this process as a state of distress that people experience (Özcan, 2016). Sartre, who adds a new dimension to the view that the loneliness of the person, which is thought to be a part of this state of distress, deepens his despair, accepts that people are alone, but does not agree with the idea that they are helpless and in a dead end. He says that a conscious person will get rid of despair by taking responsibility for his actions and thus becoming free (Spengler, 1997). However, he adds that this process is a process of anxiety (Sartre, 2019). The therapy/psychological counseling process creates a safe ground for the questioning of the person trying to show oneself that a human

exists, the anxieties that arise because of a human's confrontation with death, and the search for meaning that will reveal human existence. The psychological counseling process is like the reflection of the experience process mentioned by Camus and Sartre. While the individual questions human existence in this experience, the human experiences taking responsibility by confronting human anxiety and loneliness, and thus enjoys freedom. In addition, in the process of psychological counseling, the opinion emerges that under no circumstances can a person evaluate a person's existence from an objective point of view. Both the therapist and the client influence each other. Therefore, since the existence of both the therapist and the client is discussed in counseling environments, the way both parties question the process gains a great deal of meaning.

The spirituality that emerges between the counselor and the client, who questions their meanings and faces death and loneliness becomes the subject of the session directly. However, since this study will include how to work with religious and spiritual issues with the client in existential counseling rather than spirituality, it is important to know and evaluate the perspectives of existential thinkers on spirituality.

When it comes to religion and spirituality, one of the first things that comes to mind is belief in God. The views and beliefs of God that a person has directly affected the way of existence of that person. For this reason, there are differences between the thinkers who accept the existence of God and those who reject it in terms of interpretation of existence (Magill, 1992).

If we look at the thinkers who accept the existence of God, Dostoevsky, one of the existentialist thinkers and writers, is one of the first to express the emphasis on God in existence. According to Dostoevsky, what restrains humans in their free life, which is limited by death, is the conflicts within. Arguing that the restraint arising from these conflicts is related to religion, he says, "if God did not exist everything would be permitted." With this sentence, he mentions that if there is no religion, the system of stopping oneself will be shaken. Because a human is not a being who can direct actions according to others or the environment (Ritter, 1954). Tillich and Buber, who shaped Rollo May's thoughts, also state that there is a God, a being who watches what they do, he sometimes supports them, and they are in contact with this supreme being (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2017). Another thinker who emphasizes God and says that the existence of a person can only be realized with the existence of a God is Karl Jaspers. Jaspers, who argues that humans can experience the freedom to the fullest by accepting the existence of God, argues that God is a "transcendence" that has ceased to be a church God and spread all over the world (Jaspers, 1997). Spirituality also comes into play here. Spirituality feeds heavily on religious language, and some existential thinkers (especially Kieerkegard) link spirituality more to religion. However, here is

spirituality; it is formulated as a world of values, beliefs, transcendence, and making sense of life (Webster 2004; Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker 2005). Because today, spirituality is considered a broader concept than religion (Pargament, 1999). According to Jaspers, a person has a series of questions to answer, the ground slips under his feet and therefore people are uneasy, people face many problems that they must solve in this insecure place, the future is insecure. This insecurity pushes people to seek meaning. To evaluate this meaning-making process, human existence should be considered (Jaspers, 1997). While questioning existence, Jaspers (1997) describes three types of existence: the world, me, and God. Depending on these, the types of thought appear as wisdom, philosophy, and theology. According to Jaspers (1997), existence cannot be separated from concepts such as God, transcendent beings, and theology. Considering these views, a religion that provides communication with God and emerging spirituality is a part of existence. For this reason, on this philosophical ground, spirituality can be considered a resource in existential psychotherapy processes and spirituality can be studied from an existential point of view in the counseling process.

### **Relationship between Existential Psychology and Spirituality**

With the increase in research on spirituality in recent years, opinions on psychology theories from a spiritual perspective have also begun to find a place in the literature. In terms of psychotherapies, it is a well-known fact that the process should be carried out in a culturally sensitive manner (Bektaş, 2006). Existential therapists also encourage culturally sensitive adaptation of this therapy method. Because they argue that the flexibility of the existential perspective and its ability to take shape is suitable for this (Van Deurzen & Adams, 2017). The existential perspective, which also emphasizes the spiritual dimension among the dimensions of life, does not reject this dimension of the human being. In this direction, the religious beliefs and spiritual aspects of the clients who come to psychotherapy should not be ignored, and the principles of the spiritually oriented counseling process should be used, when necessary, in order to carry out the process with these clients (Dilen, 2019). Since the existential psychotherapy approach is predominantly philosophical, there has been a need to conduct field research on spiritually oriented counseling from an existential perspective within the framework of basic philosophy, to draw the framework for the counseling process, to adapt the techniques, and to present case examples. In the following lines, based on this need, information about religious and spiritual-oriented psychological counseling will be given from an existential perspective.

Some aspects related to spiritually oriented-existential counseling preoccupy the minds of the field workers. There are different views on the association with religion, which causes this confusion. Regarding this, Yalom (2000) states: “There is a complex and tense relationship between Existential Psychotherapy and religion. But they are

cousins from common ancestors who have similar anxieties,” he says, revealing this complexity. [Carey and Eschbach \(2003\)](#) put forward the following views on the basic concepts of existentialism and religious beliefs:

[Yalom \(2001\)](#) observed that in the face of death, people want to do something with their lives. However, an eternal world and belief in the creator are effective in discovering the meaning of death. On the other hand, Yalom says that he only wants to make sense of the part that we live and know and to remind the fact that we are finite beings, even though we desire eternity. A person wants freedom throughout one’s life but also avoids facing freedom. However, the world is narrow for those who have criteria of freedom limited to humans. People feel the need to be liberated and connected at the same time. However, for the person who is not completely satisfied with the connection with people, there is a need for a connection in which humans can connect and accept in every way ([Yalom, 2001](#)).

[Yalom \(2018\)](#) underlines the effect of religion in the process of coping with existential concerns. According to [Yalom \(1998\)](#), humans find solace in a being who watches and protects them, and who promises them an eternal union through religion. However, [Yalom \(2018\)](#) underlined that religion, which connects man with God, and spirituality (unlike Kierkegaard) are not the same thing. [Cornett \(1998\)](#) expresses a similar view: “Spirituality is such a broad and ambiguous concept that it often frightens those who place it in the context of a discussion.” [Van Deurzen \(1997\)](#) also agrees with them, saying that confessing atheism or agnosticism does not necessarily imply the absence of a meaning and value system at the basis of one’s existence. [Yalom \(1998\)](#), while describing the basic conflicts of human beings in the titles of death, freedom (which includes responsibility), isolation, and meaning, he entered the concept of God and spiritual resources, although not very deeply. And he states that people are nourished by spirituality while coping with these conflicts. When this view is interpreted, God is a being that human beings accept unconditionally and can be connected to at any time. Consequently, when people face freedom and loneliness, they can regulate these concerns with their belief in God. While religion brings spirituality, spirituality is a broader concept. Being in touch with religion and spirituality, using both as a resource, and deepening the conflicts related to both will be both liberating for humans and a balm for human helplessness.

While research on spirituality is still ongoing, although a clear framework has not been drawn, four basic themes related to spirituality have been identified in the research: existential reality, transcendence, connectedness, and power/force/energy ([Chiu et al., 2004](#)). When looking at spirituality in this context, the following views have been proposed: (i) Spirituality involves thinking about fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of one’s life, (ii) Spirituality includes the search for sustainable,

transcendent values, (iii) Spirituality is relational and includes the search for connection with others and the world, (iv) Spirituality may or may not include belief in a God and/or institutional religion, (v) Spirituality may include wonder and experiential moments of awe, transcendence, peak experiences, and flow, (vi) Spirituality may or may not be (Ronkainen et al., 2015; Watson and Nesti 2005). In addition to all these, spiritually oriented-psychological counseling is one of the results of the search for meaning, because spirituality is defined as the search for meaning, value, and purpose in one's life (Özdoğan, 2006). Seeking meaning and purpose in life and aiming to live according to basic personal beliefs are considered spirituality (Neck and Milliman 1994). The spirituality-based process can also be evaluated within the scope of the search for meaning (Dilen, 2019). Puchalski and Romer (2000) defined spirituality as "that which allows one to experience transcendent meaning in life". According to another view, it is a structure that includes the concepts of spirituality, belief, and (or) meaning. Faith is a belief in a higher transcendent power, not necessarily defined as God, and does not need to be achieved through the rituals or beliefs of an organized religion (Brady et al., 1999; Karasu, 1999; Breitbart et al., 2004). According to another view, spirituality is the area of existence that allows the individual to connect with the world and others intimately. Looking at others beyond oneself increases self-awareness and facilitates personal development (Eliason et al., 2010).

From this perspective, it can be said that spirituality's search for meaning, search for value, state of being relational, state of influencing each other, and loneliness/isolation are related to existentialism. At the same time, since the concepts of existential psychotherapy such as freedom, responsibility, and death cannot be independent of the search for meaning, the relationship between spirituality and existential psychotherapy is undeniable. The necessary theoretical ground for the evaluation of spiritually oriented psychological counseling processes, which is one of the aims of this study, from an existential point of view has been revealed. In the literature, there are not enough studies in which the therapeutic process of existential spiritually oriented counseling is explained step by step, and clues are included. Therefore, it is crucial for the employees in the field to explain the spiritually-oriented psychological counseling process in terms of the existential approach on this theoretical ground.

### **The Therapeutic Process in Existential Spiritually Oriented Counseling and Psychotherapy**

One of the most important steps in the psychological counseling process is to set goals (Yüksel-Şahin, 2018). In this direction, the existential purpose of the psychological counseling processes to be carried out from an existential perspective is to support the clients to open ways to save them from being passive victims of the conditions and to invite them to be active participants in their lives through high awareness and responsibility. This



process helps a person to take ownership of her/his life, feelings, choices, and beliefs in a meaningful way and to establish a real relationship with herself/himself the world, and others (May, 1979;1983). In summary, the main purpose of existential therapy is to increase awareness (Bugental, 1990). To achieve this purpose, existential psychotherapy is divided into three parts (Van Deurzen, 2017): (i) *Beginning: Determining the meanings that the client attributes about oneself and the world.* How the client makes sense of existence is determined. At this stage, clients often put the responsibility on “others” and talk about how victimized they are. (ii) *Developing: Discovering the sources of clients’ current values and meanings.* At this stage, the therapist encourages the clients on a journey of discovery. At this stage, clients may find it difficult because they have to discover themselves, face some of their values and understandings, and even reconstruct them. Currently, the clients see which life choices they have made and experience awareness on awareness. (iii) *Learning and Responsibility: The client taking action and making a difference.* In this phase, the clients realize the consequences of their actions and start to take steps toward the life they wanted. The process has left the therapy room and started to integrate with general life.

A mental health professional who wants to work with an existential approach; in cases where the client brings a spiritual issue to the session, the client’s spiritual resources are strong, the client has spiritual conflicts or the client wants to work on spirituality, she/he may prefer spiritually oriented counseling. In this case, the following stages can be followed in the existential spiritually oriented counseling process: (i) *Beginning:* Identifying the subject brought by the client and investigating the meanings he/she attributes to the subject. Determining the meaning and importance of spirituality in the subject brought or coping strategies used. Investigation of the relationship of responsibility, especially with religious and spiritual elements, (ii) *Developing:* Investigation of whether spirituality is used as a resource in the ascribed meanings, the discovery of values and meanings in the process brought so far. Looking at the relationship between spirituality and meaning, confronting contradictory meanings, raising awareness, and restructuring meanings, (iii) *Learning and Responsibility:* Making choices, taking responsibility, and taking action regarding newly constructed values and meanings.

After the therapeutic process steps are planned, the client’s existence, anxiety, and responsibilities in the session room are studied through techniques. Especially in the search for meaning that emerges in spiritually-oriented counseling, standing in the right place and asking the right questions will increase awareness, which is the purpose of the process, and will raise new questions in the search for meaning.

### **Existential Spiritual-Oriented Counseling and Psychotherapy Techniques**

The existentialist psychotherapists who conducted the process did not offer a clear set of techniques, unlike the approaches before them. This is because “meaning”

comes before technique (Van Deurzen, 1997). For some reason, what will be done and applied is selected according to the phenomenological field of the client. In other words, before using the technique, the counselor should consider the client's readiness and needs and act accordingly (Van Deurzen, 1997). For this reason, it is difficult to come across clearly defined techniques. However, Yalom mentioned some exercises and practice examples in his books in which he explained his practices (Yalom, 2018). In this part of the study, adaptation examples for existential spiritually oriented counseling processes are given in light of the concepts and practice examples mentioned by Yalom (2018).

### **Loneliness and Relationship**

Humans are born alone and die alone. In the life between these two points, they make their choices alone and takes their responsibilities alone, so humans have to face loneliness throughout their life. According to Nietzsche, to transcend life, man must transcend himself. The person who transcends himself is alone. This loneliness is more than ordinary, it is valuable loneliness (Aşkan, 1996).

The clients to whom the existential approach is currently relevant are those who are overwhelmed by their loneliness (Corey, 2015). A person is alone because he/she cannot throw the responsibility on someone else, and even if he/she ignores it, he/she will even take responsibility for it. In the world of responsibilities, a person will also have to take responsibility for loneliness. In addition, facing death and freedom brings him/her loneliness (Yalom, 2018).

From the existential perspective, loneliness and isolation are interchangeable. Yalom preferred isolation. Existential isolation results from the unbridgeable distance between a person and others. Others in this definition describe both the world and people and parts within themselves. Isolation persists despite a process of integration. Only if one can face and accept his/her existential isolation can he/she turn towards others with love. Acceptance of loneliness is challenging and sometimes overwhelming. Thus, defenses are established against loneliness (Yalom, 2018). Loneliness often comes up in the therapy process. The therapist helps the client to face and accept loneliness. One of the most important factors in the process of coping with loneliness is establishing a relationship. Where there is a relationship, there is also spirituality (Eliason, et al., 2007). When two individuals meet each other, they both change. The essence of a good counseling relationship is one in which the counselor uses personal experience, self-awareness, and belief to positively influence the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship. In this way, an extremely sincere and humane behavior such as being present for another person, showing empathy, and showing unconditional acceptance can be completely curative (Eliason & Smith, 2004; Rogers, 1951, 1961).

The importance given to the relationship by the existential approach takes a very strong place in spiritually oriented-counseling. The fact that spirituality is a vital component in counseling, it can be a healing force that acts on the therapist as well as the client. The relationship between the counselor/therapist and his or her spirituality also has a strong influence on the counseling process. Through the disclosures of the true self in *me* and *you* encounter, both the therapist and the client can draw their spirituality into the relationship. In this way, spirituality exists in the session room in the relationship between the client and the therapist. According to one view, even the presence of a person gives rise to spirituality (Eliason, 2000; Eliason et al., 2001, 2007). The emphasis on spirituality between the therapist and the client in these views' sheds light on the importance of the relationship in the session room in coping with loneliness in existential spiritually oriented counseling. According to existential therapy, the quality of the relationship that arises from one to the other during the session is one of the main factors that bring positive change (Corey, 2015). According to this perspective, existential therapy is a journey that the client and the therapist embark on to seek and question themselves (Vontress et al., 1999).

May (1958, 1979, 1983) rejected the impersonal techniques of Freudian analysis and invited therapists to enter the client's life. This call is in line with Yalom's (2002) view that diagnostic labeling limits vision and clinical perspective, causing the client to selectively ignore parts of the history that do not fit the diagnosis. The existential perspective has ruled out many counseling techniques because it believes it interferes with the relationship between the client and the therapist.

Yalom (2002) also talks about the importance of the relationship when a person opens oneself to another person and even the feeling of being accepted is healing. And so, nothing can prevent the relationship between the client and the therapist. The therapist should ask himself/herself the following questions about evaluating the relationship during the therapy process (Yalom, 2002):

How is our relationship with my client? What is going on between us? Is my client acting competitive, ambitious, angry, etc. with me? Does she/he accept or reject my offers of help? Is he/she skeptical or indifferent?

To evaluate the relationship, the therapist may ask the following questions to the client (Yalom, 2002):

How are you and how am I today? How do you see the field between us today? How do you think we were today? Now think half an hour ahead, how will you feel about you and me on the way home? What will be the unspoken things today?

Thanks to these questions, both the therapist and the client will evaluate the relationship between them. As mentioned above, the spirituality that existed during the relationship between two people will also be expressed in this way.

## Meaning

Victor Frankl is the person who worked in detail on meaning in existential therapy. However, in this study, the perspective on the meaning of the therapy approach of Yalom and May is explained. Humans need meaning throughout their life and seek meaning. They are almost certain that a meaningless life cannot be sustained. However, since there is no such thing as certainty in a world where people exist, there is no exact meaning. In this case, how will a being who is constantly looking for meaning cope with a world where there is no meaning? (Yalom, 2018). Debates about how a non-religious person can meet this need for meaning have continued for years. Because a system taken from people cannot be abandoned without replacing it with a new one. Philosophers and thinkers have written about living in the moment, self-realization, self-transcendence, hedonistic solution, creativity, altruism, devotion to a cause, and letting life flow for the answers to this question (Yalom, 2018). In addition to these meanings, some offer the view that people will not be satisfied without having an eternal meaning (Carey & Eschbach, 2003). In addition, Nagel mentions the importance of religion and God in the search for meaning and states that the anxiety in the search for meaning will decrease if the sources are fed. In this view, Nagel says that besides the other meanings listed, there is also a religious meaning and that the time lived in the world is the preparation for eternal life (Sezer, 2012). For people who believe in a religion or want to be fed spiritually, religious and spiritual needs have a significant place in their search for meaning (Dilen, 2019). However, the meaning of the existential therapist differs from these.

According to the existential approach, human beings and the world they live in are not independent of each other. For this reason, the physical world and the spiritual structure of human beings affect each other and create meaning. Being in this totality is called “dasein”. A person’s health depends on the power of dasein on the whole. (May, 1994). Dasein is defined as a person strengthens against the world and its contents while living (Yazgan-İnanç & Yerlikaya, 2011). With dasein, which means being here, existential philosophy bases the concept of being at the moment, because being here in the moment is existence. From this perspective, existential therapy does not focus on the problems themselves and provides a context that gives meaning to the individual’s suffering. With the understanding of one’s role in the world, or even the awareness of one’s as yet unknown role, they can gather their inner resources of resilience and dispel the impermanence of their suffering. Given the degree of trauma and conflict in the world, existential theory and its expression in counseling practice will continue to be influential (Eliason et al., 2010). What is meant here is to discover the meaning of even the problem brought by the client. The therapist should investigate what meaning the client gives to the problem brought by him. Religion and spirituality are also two concepts related to the meaning of humans. According to Yalom (1998), human beings are nourished by religion and spirituality and find solace

in spirituality, which is a transcendent experience, as they face their fundamental conflict, and meaning. It will be important to keep an eye on the meanings of religion and spirituality for the client applying for spiritually-oriented counseling.

### **Transparency and Self-Disclosure**

Throughout the therapeutic process, the therapist must be honest and open to the client about his or her life. In this way, a connection is established between life and the relationship between the therapist and the client. (Van Deurzen, 1997). What will enable the process to gain positive momentum is the presence of the therapist and the integration of the client's pieces like puzzle pieces (Corey, 2015). Although therapists have concerns about self-disclosure, Yalom (2002) has examined self-disclosure under three headings: (i) *The mechanism of therapy*: At this stage, real clarity is presented about the mechanism of therapy. Concepts such as privacy and here and now are clarified. In spiritually oriented counseling, on the other hand, it includes giving information about what a spiritually oriented counselor is and what it does not mean, its difference from other orientations, and what awaits the client in the process. (ii) *Emotions in the here and now*: It involves the therapist opening up about the feelings he or she feels towards the client at that moment. However, the main issue here is that this opening is in favor of the client and that it is transmitted in a healthy way. In spiritually-oriented psychological counseling, it can be carried out as the expression of spiritual feelings that occur in the environment in that room at that moment. (iii) *The therapist's own life*: Although the therapist's opening of his/her own life is generally viewed as hesitant, Yalom (2018) says that opening up his/her own life mostly has a positive effect on the process. Especially when the client asked questions about the therapist's life, the therapist did not see any harm in answering these questions sincerely and honestly. In the process of spiritually oriented-counseling, if the therapist has had an experience similar to the client's, he or she can share it with the client and even become a model for the client. Or it can make the client feel that he/she is not alone. In this way, the client can also be supported to open up.

### **Supporting**

Generally, clients remember the supportive words and reactions of their therapists about therapy years later (Yalom, 2011). For this reason, Yalom (2002) emphasizes that support is extremely important. It is always crucial, to be honest and open in supportive statements. For support, any behavior observed in the client's history or during the therapy process can be given as an example. In addition, the therapist can present positive feedback about the client as support (Yalom, 2003). There is no harm in giving objective praise, especially when the client takes responsibility and takes an important step or takes action. However, each therapist has a unique style, and the therapist's skill will be to express these supporting statements uniquely (Yalom, 2018).

Supporting clients who resort to the process in religious or spiritual matters; appears as an essential skill in subjects such as confronting death, questioning identity and meaning, starting or continuing worship, will, and choice. It is important to offer realistic support to the client here.

### **Empathy**

The concept of empathy and true empathy, which was discussed in detail by Rogers (1961), is also vital in existential therapy. According to existential psychotherapy, empathy is particularly concerned with the here and now (Yalom, 2011). It is very important to activate it at that moment. Therapy hours have a different meaning for clients than they do for therapists. Therefore, it is very valuable to deal with what the client feels in the session room (Yalom, 2002). Yalom (2002) divides empathy into two parts: (i) *Looking through the client's glasses*: Sometimes there are situations where the therapist pays a lot of attention but the client pays no attention, or vice versa. In such cases, it would be helpful to ask the client to evaluate previous sessions. (ii) *Teaching empathy to the client*: Allowing the client to understand the therapist's feelings also teaches empathy to the client. For example, when asked how others would feel in a particular situation, the therapist may include himself/herself in "others". Or, the therapist can clarify and shed light on the client's assumptions about the therapist.

### **Here and Now**

The here-and-now approach, which exists in many approaches, is also of particular importance for existential therapy and spiritually oriented-psychological counseling. According to the existential approach, there are two basic assumptions of the here and now (Yalom, 2002): (i) *Interpersonal relations*: Many clients who come to therapy experience problems in their interpersonal relationships, and these problems sometimes serve other problems they bring to therapy. (ii) *Microcosm*: The behavioral patterns that the clients develop depending on the problem in interpersonal relationships will very likely emerge in their relationship with the therapist.

In the light of these two assumptions and the information discussed in the relationship title above, the therapist notices the expressions that emerge in the relationship between the therapist and the client; if the therapist evaluates the axis of here and now, the therapist will support the client to take a step towards awareness. If the therapist is having a hard time bringing the client to the here and now, they can get support from their feelings. At this point, it would be useful for him to talk about how he feels about the relationship at that moment (Yalom, 2002). In the context of spiritually-oriented psychological counseling, the relationship that the client establishes with the therapist may be similar to the relationship he or she establishes

with spiritual and religious elements. For example, a therapist who has noticed that the client sees the therapist as an authority talks about the anger that is present at the moment when the client is angry. While the anger is examined in detail, the anger of the client towards religious authorities may emerge.

### Talking About Death

Humans have been facing death since the first day they came to life and have to live with this truth throughout their life. This obligation can lead the individual to psychopathology, and it can also be one of the methods of coping with problems. Heidegger says that being aware of death liberates people (Young, 2000). In addition to this, May (2017) states that death is an uncontrollable situation, and the way we face death interferes with our freedom. In this parallel, Yalom (2018) mentions 4 propositions about death. These are: (i) *Death occupies an important place in our spiritual life*. It annoys us by constantly grumbling in the background. (ii) *Children are very interested in death*. One of the first developmental stages is coping with the fear of death. (iii) *We use various methods to deal with fears and these deep-seated fears*. If these defenses are not developed healthily, they can lead to clinical situations. In other words, psychopathology is a result of not being able to handle death. (iv) *Therefore, an effective therapy process is possible with awareness of death*.

Yalom (2018) rejects the idea that “when there is death we do not exist when we exist there is no death” while describing the connection between death and life. On the contrary, life and death are intertwined, when death comes to mind while life continues; he thinks that this leads to authentic existence. Because when we come to life, we bring death with us. Even though we try to ignore it, even this effort to ignore it proves the difficulty of its existence (Verneaux, 1994). The important thing is to deal with it. He even observed that facing death in cancer patients he worked with caused effective changes in their lives (Yalom, 2018). The reasons for this can be summarized as follows. Death, by making someone to look at something’s becoming rather than the way it happened; raises the person above the current state of existence (Yalom, 2018). When the fear of death is present, all other fears lose their meaning. In this case, if the person can cope with the fear of death healthily, he/she can feel a strong dominance. When it comes to death, delays disappear. That is, “Existence cannot be postponed.” (Yalom, 2018).

In particular, the grieving process is a process in which death awareness is studied. A bereaved often begins to ask fundamental existential questions such as, “Who am I working for?” and “What am I doing for?”. In a therapy process, these questions are important in terms of revealing one’s meaning (Yalom, 2018).

Of course, it is necessary to work on death anxiety in the therapy process. The important point is that the therapist does not have to give the client this experience.

Instead, he should follow the clues and trace the client's denial and acceptance processes. The subject of death, which is at the center of existence, somehow exists in the therapy process. Although many therapists avoid talking about death, the reasons for talking about death are as follows: Therapy is real life and there is no life without death. It has been observed that clients who face death show a positive development and it is beneficial in this respect. In studies conducted with those who are grieving the death of another, it has been observed that talking about death has a more practical effect on development than before mourning (Yalom, 2002). Parallel to the spiritually-oriented counseling processes, it is almost impossible to escape death. For this reason, the therapist should be brave in this regard and encourage the client. In the therapy, which progresses as a process in which what death means for the client, the concerns about death are investigated, the fear of death is discussed in parts, religious beliefs about death are discussed, and dreams about death are mentioned, the client will also encounter death in a safe environment (Yalom, 2002). In this way, the client who encounters a reality such as death will also face the steps one will take and the responsibilities he will take about what he can do.

### **Supporting the Client to Take Responsibility**

People become free with the choices they make while constructing their existence in the world and the responsibilities they will take as a result of these choices (Çelik, 2017). Choices and the freedom that comes, as a result, impose a responsibility on people. In this way, the link between freedom, choice, and responsibility is established. Although the concept of responsibility does not seem to be related to existence at first, when a person creates his existence, one creates the meaning of the world one fills. For this reason, it is the individual's responsibility to create meaning and create one's existence. So it is truly related. Regarding this, Sartre says, "Humans are also fully responsible for their own life; they are responsible not only for their actions but also for the situations in which they cannot act", emphasizing that he is responsible for every moment. However, he adds that humans cannot be responsible unless they're completely free (Sartre, 2019). Yalom (2018) does not completely agree with Sartre's view. He worries that this will lead to landlessness, as it will be ignoring the meanings outside of one's own. However, of course, he often includes the concept of responsibility in his works and especially mentions how responsible therapists will work with their clients. Because he says that no therapist can complete a day without experiencing the experience of avoiding responsibility.

One of the things clients do to avoid responsibility is a compulsion. In other words, they do not want to accept that they chose the life they are complaining about willingly. Because if they accept the choice, it is necessary to take responsibility, which is not easy for everyone. The second is the displacement of responsibility. In this case,



clients attribute the responsibility for the process to the therapist, the problem, the causes, or someone else. Because realizing that they have the responsibility can cause a sudden confrontation with freedom. This can also create anxiety. Here it will be necessary to help the client accept that their feelings are their own. The last is the denial of responsibility. In other words, it is “losing mind” (Yalom, 2011). Clients refuse responsibilities for a period when they are not even responsible for their behavior. That is, they avoid autonomous behavior. Clients who do this are usually those who are aware of what they need to do but do not take steps. They are likely to be attached to the therapist (Yalom, 2018).

Clients will experience taking responsibility in the process, and sometimes, of course, they will have difficulties. However, the thing that the therapist should pay attention to is not taking responsibility for the client. Yalom (2013) says this: “Do not usurp the personal responsibilities of others. Do not aspire to be a breast that suckles the whole universe. If you want people to grow up, help them learn to be their own parents.”

Responsibility, which is one of the most tough stages of the therapy process, is a hard experience for most clients and therapists. Clients want to blame someone or something else for the events that happen to them or what they experience, and they want to throw the responsibility at someone else. In this sense, the therapist trying to understand the client should give the client responsibility after a certain point (Yalom, 2002). It is also frequently encountered in spiritually oriented counseling processes that responsibility is given to fate, death, God, religious authorities, religious rules, habits, or someone else. At the stage of reassigning the responsibility to the client, the arrangements made within the sessions will help to develop a sense of responsibility. Therapists can give the responsibility to clients with some behaviors such as not being reminded of the session day and time, waiting for the client to break the silence being a sanction in case of being late or canceling late, and asking the client for summaries to be made during the session. However, for the client to realize the responsibilities related to one’s life, “*Even if 99% of these events are the fault of others, what can belong to you in the remaining 1%?*” (Yalom, 2002), “*Where are you in this situation/what are you doing?*”, “*I could not hear your voice in the story you told?*” can be emphasized to the client. It should not be forgotten that these sentences should be renewed according to the relationship between the therapist and the client. Using it, in the same way, may not be in favor of the client. In addition, it should not be forgotten that decisions should never be made on behalf of the client in cases where the client is in a dilemma or wants to take action. The fact that the client is at the decision stage also means that she/he is facing freedom (Yalom, 2002).

## **Dream**

The main purpose of the dream study of the existential approach is to reveal the meanings that the client attributes to the symbols (May & Yalom, 1989). Therefore, every detail in the dream is mentioned and its meanings are questioned.

The client is requested to describe his/her dream repeatedly, that affects the client, or that the client wants to tell. While the client describes the dream in detail, the therapist/psychological counselor takes notes so as not to forget every detail. Yalom (2002) says “pillage and plunder the dream” for this. What is meant here is to scrutinize the dream and discuss every detail with the client comprehensively. Data that will affect the therapy process will be reached.

Then, the noted symbols are examined thoroughly with the client. What these symbols mean for the client is questioned (Yüksel Şahin, 2018). In the use of existential dream work in spiritual psychological counseling, it is important to go into the details of the client’s spiritual dreams and question their meanings.

## **Case Example**

### **Anamnesis**

The client is a 35-year-old single woman working in the private sector. She applied to the therapy process regarding the recent loss of her father, the mourning process, spiritual depression, and the search for meaning. The client lives with her older sister and mother. The client received an intense religious education from her family and shaped her life according to religious rules for a certain period of time. After she started to work abroad later her university graduation, she started not to prefer her religious life over time, she left the hijab abroad, which she preferred at a young age of her own accord. After the death of her father, she returned to Turkey for sure and started new questions in her life with the mourning process, she started to question the meaning of life. For this reason, she applied to the existentialist spiritually oriented counseling process. The purpose of the client, in her own words, is to find reasons to live, to alleviate her father’s grief, and to get rid of revolving thoughts about the past.

### **Formulation**

The case formulation was prepared considering the beginning, developing, learning, and responsibility stages of existential psychotherapy. According to this:

*Beginning:* In the therapy process, first of all, the reasons for the client’s application were emphasized and a detailed analysis was made. These were determined as the mourning process, confrontation with death, search for meaning, religious/spiritual search, and inability to decide with one’s life. Afterward, research on the

meanings attributed to these subjects by the client continued. It has been noticed that the counselee has not evaluated spirituality, which she considers the meaning of life, in the last five years, emphasizing the feeling of emptiness created by this situation. It has been observed that these void forces the client to evaluate death and make decisions for the future of her life. The client states that she has lost all the reasons she knows to hold on to life, and this aimlessness drags her to a dark place. At the beginning stage, when the meanings of the material brought by the client were questioned, the meanings of meaning, reason for living, “losing” the reasons for living, death, darkness, and clinging were discussed with the client one by one. When talking about the meanings that the counselee attributed to spirituality before and after, it was determined that she evaluated spirituality only within the scope of the religious education she received from her family and did not create another option.

*Developing:* After the discovery of meanings, how and when these meanings are formed is emphasized. If the client discovers that the freedom and meaning she encounters are not her meaning, the client is supported. This stage is usually the longest and can sometimes be intertwined with the learning and responsibility stage. In addition, the client is often brought to the “here and now” to work on relationship building and loneliness anxiety. Here, the client is supported in terms of getting rid of this meaning-making process shaped by the pressure of society and family and creating her own meaning. It has been seen that avoiding confronting death, which is one of the important points, is also dependent on this. In the sessions about death, attention was drawn to the “here and now” in the life that continues with the client, who stated that death was not as scary as it was seen from afar. Sessions were seen as an opportunity for the client to experience the “here and now” and were practiced here. Practicing the “here and now” is also necessary for repetitive reflections on the past. In these sessions, which were spoken with the client, the client experienced awareness at the point of creating her own spiritual meaning and getting rid of the spiritual meaning from the family. However, at this stage of the process, themes of dreams such as murdering the father, being caught red-handed, not being able to get out of a narrow room, etc. drew attention. In the sessions in which dreams were scrutinized, she realized that she felt guilty about her family to the point of creating her own spiritual meaning.

In addition, it has been observed that the client sometimes came to the next session without thinking about the issues that she should think about, and in these cases, the client’s embarrassment was emphasized by drawing attention to the relationship between the client and the therapist. Later, the microcosm of this feeling was mentioned, and it was realized that she had difficulty fulfilling her responsibilities in her life and that she experienced this embarrassment every time she did not. The state of not taking responsibility despite embarrassment projects the theme of not

living just because there is death. Within the framework of freedom and barriers to taking responsibility, this embarrassment was discussed, and steps were taken toward awareness.

*Learning and Responsibility:* As a result of the awareness reached, the stage of learning and responsibility has been started. Here, the client is expected to take action by making inferences from their awareness. For this, the appropriate environment for the client is provided by the therapist. The therapist may first practice the take-to-action phase in the session room.

The mourning process of the client, who stated that what she did to her father felt like disloyalty at the point of finding her own meaning, also doubled this stage. Here, the issues of guilt and separation have been studied based on the importance of the client taking a step towards liberation by taking responsibility. The meanings she attributed to the mourning and the way of life of mourning and the loneliness she felt continued to be discussed in parallel. In the grieving process, the client asks the therapist, “Did you lose someone?” In response to her question, she opened herself up and supported the client. After the sessions, in which various exercises were made to take responsibility for her own meaning and life, and where emotions and empathy were dominant, the client took steps to create her own meaning after a painful process and began to question the reality and accuracy of the religious education she received from her family. She entered a new learning process by doing research on the question marks in her mind. In this process, she started to determine her mistakes and truths. The client is supported to take action in line with what they have learned, and the client is encouraged to experience freedom in decision-making situations without taking responsibility. The steps taken by the client were praised from the objective window.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study has been shaped mainly within the framework of the views of Yalom and later May, who have had a great impact on the existence of Existential Psychotherapy. Considering the views of Yalom and May, it can be said that confronting death and freedom is one of the basic concerns of human beings, and the basic formula of the theory is to take responsibility and take action and live existential freedom in a balanced way in order to cope with these anxieties. The formula in question was shaped by the fact that Yalom and May examined and influenced the views of existential thinkers such as Sartre, Camus, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer and brought existence to therapy rooms. Not all comments were taken as is filtered and evaluated.

Within the framework of this formula, it is seen that the main purpose of the therapist is to support the client at the point of creating one’s own existence and using the relevant techniques. Although existential psychotherapy already contains spiritual

elements and even emphasizes cultural sensitivity, it is not possible to develop a formula suitable for every culture and religion. For this reason, Yalom mentions that each therapist will create their own approach. In this direction, in this study, a culturally sensitive study was carried out by considering the concept, technique, and structure of the existential approach. In addition, since an existentialist perspective on spiritually oriented counseling is not presented in the literature, this paper is thought to contribute to the literature.

In addition, the option to go beyond talking about the spiritual issues that existential psychotherapy has already done in the session, to identify the spiritual resources of the client and to use these resources if the client's readiness is appropriate, is also mentioned in this study. In addition, a guide is presented to therapists or psychological counselors who want to work within the framework of the existential approach in the face of the client's request for a spiritually oriented process.

The existential approach, unlike other approaches before it, opened an important period by not ignoring spiritual and religious issues in the session room and shedding light on those who came after it. In this respect, it is considered quite suitable for spiritually oriented-psychological counseling processes. In addition to these, it may be risky for the client to view religion, God, and spiritual elements as just an object. For this reason, the therapist should be careful. In addition to all these, a professional who wants to do psychological counseling with an existential spiritual orientation should not be limited to Yalom and May; surely it also feeds on Frankl's views; it is also important to understand logotherapy. It is recommended to look at Frankl's concept of meaning, especially in the sessions where meaning will be studied.

In future studies, existential spiritually oriented counseling adaptations can be made to group processes, Islamic culture, and adolescents; models can be developed.

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# Positive Psychology and Spirituality: A Review Study

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## Abstract

Unlike traditional psychotherapy approaches focused on disease and disorder, positive psychology has opened a new window to the science of psychology by emphasizing the importance of embracing all aspects of individuals. Positive psychology approach not only underlines that the positive, strong aspects of individuals and the good aspects of life deserve at least as much attention as negative facts, but also states that the negative effects of existing problems can be eliminated by identifying and supporting the positive and strong aspects of the individual. Furthermore, positive psychology highlights the necessity of examining these aspects with scientific methods. Spirituality and religious belief occupy a central position in the lives of many individuals and affect the lives of individuals in various ways. Ignoring the spiritual/religious aspect of individuals in the psychotherapy process will lead to an incomplete evaluation. This is contrary to the basic point of view of positive psychology. Positive psychology is open to addressing spirituality in the psychotherapy process. In addition, spirituality is a notion that is examined as part of character strength and virtues in the positive psychology perspective. In this study, which aims to examine the place of spirituality in positive psychology, the relationship between positive psychology and spirituality is examined within the framework of the relevant literature, the basic concepts of positive psychology are discussed within the framework of spirituality. Additionally, the characteristics of the positive psychotherapy process are examined, the studies in which spiritual/religious practices are included in the positive psychotherapy process and these studies effects were given. It is hoped that this study will complete the missing points in the literature and offer a new perspective to practitioners and researchers.

## Keywords:

Positive psychology • spirituality • positive psychotherapy • spiritually oriented positive psychotherapy • review study

## Pozitif Psikoloji ve Maneviyat: Bir Derleme Çalışması

### Öz

Pozitif psikoloji, hastalık ve bozukluk odaklı geleneksel psikoterapi yaklaşımlarının aksine, bireylerin tüm yönleriyle ele alınmasını önemi belirterek psikoloji bilimine yeni bir pencere açmıştır. Pozitif psikoloji, bireylerin sahip olduğu olumlu, güçlü yönlerin ve yaşamın iyi yönlerinin de en az olumsuz olgular kadar ilgiyi hak ettiğinin altını çizmekte, ferdin olumlu ve güçlü yönlerinin belirlenip desteklenerek, var olan problemlerin olumsuz etkilerinden arınabileceğini belirtmekte, bu yönlerin de bilimsel yöntemlerle incelenmesi gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır. Maneviyat ve dini inanç, pek çok bireyin yaşamında merkezi bir konumda yer almakta, bireylerin yaşamını çeşitli yönlerden etkilemektedir. Psikoterapi sürecinde bireylerin manevi/dini yönünü gözardı etmek, eksik bir değerlendirmeye sebep olacaktır. Bu durum, pozitif psikolojinin temel bakış açısına aykırıdır. Pozitif psikoloji, maneviyyatın, psikoterapi sürecinde ele alınmasına açıktır. Ayrıca, pozitif psikoloji yaklaşımında maneviyyat, karakter güçleri ve erdemler başlığı altında başlı başına ele alınan bir kavram olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Maneviyyatın pozitif psikolojideki yerinin incelenmesini amaçlayan bu çalışmada, ilgili literatür çerçevesinde pozitif psikoloji ve maneviyyat ilişkisi incelenmiş, pozitif psikolojinin temel kavramları maneviyyat çerçevesinde ele alınmış, genel hatlarıyla pozitif psikoterapi sürecinin özelliklerine yer verilmiş, manevi/dini uygulamaların pozitif psikoterapi sürecine dahil edildiği çalışmalar ve bu çalışmaların etkileri incelenmiştir. Yurtdışında maneviyyatın psikoterapi sürecine dâhil edildiği pozitif psikoloji odaklı çalışmalar olsa da, Türkiye'de bu çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu çalışmanın, alanyazında eksik noktaları tamamlayacağı, uygulayıcı ve araştırmacılara yeni bir bakış açısı sunacağı umulmaktadır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler:

Pozitif psikoloji • maneviyyat • pozitif psikoterapi • manevi yönelimli pozitif psikoterapi • derleme çalışması

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## **Overview of Positive Psychology**

### **The Birth of Positive Psychology**

The term positive psychology was first used by Abraham Maslow in 1954 as a chapter title in his book *Motivation and Personality*. Positive psychology tries to comprehend the conditions which increases individuals' quality of life and examines processes that can improve the lives of individuals, groups, institutions, and organizations. Positive psychology, defined in this way, has a long history, stretching back to William James's "healthy mindedness" writings at 1902, Allport's studies of the characteristics of positive people, Maslow's writings advocating the need to study healthy people rather than sick people at 1968. However, especially in the last half century, studies focused on problem and pathology have increased in the world of psychology, and studies on the elements that make life worth living have decreased. This situation has been altered, and interest in positive psychology has grown thanks to psychologist Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania. That's why, he is considered the leading representative of the theory (Synder ve Lopez, 2007; Gable ve Haidt, 2005). According to Seligman, psychology has three distinct tasks. These tasks include treating mental illnesses and pathologies, assisting everyone in living more purposeful and productive lives, and identifying and strengthen the areas in which individuals are talented. The economic factors revealed by the Second World War placed pathology in the focus of psychology. The institutions that funded the researchers gave priority to research on mental health problems and the improvement of the mental state of war veterans. In this process, mental disorders such as depression and schizophrenia have been investigated, and great progress has been made in the understanding, measurement and treatment of these disorders. However, putting pathology at the center has led to the ignoring of the positive psychological structures that make life worth living, and the strengths that make up people's coping resources. Traditional approaches have placed so much emphasis on the identification and management of pathological diseases that research on the nature of psychological health has remained remarkably scarce. Two other fundamental missions of psychology have been neglected. At this point, we come across positive psychology. Positive emotions, one's strengths and virtues are the focal points of positive psychology. It emphasizes that the task of the science of psychology is not only to examine pathology, weakness and damage, but that the correct intervention is not only to correct the bad, but to develop and nurture the good (Seligman & Csikszentmihályi, 2000; Kennon & King, 2001; Seligman, 2002b). In this context, it examines concepts related to healthy life such as optimism, subjective well-being, resilience, meaning, hope, spirituality and religiosity (Salsman et al., 2005).

### **What Is Positive Psychology and What Is It Not?**

When it comes to positive psychology, a question such as “Are other approaches negative?” may come to your mind. The positive psychology approach does not imply that other schools of psychology are negative or unnecessary. It draws attention to the imbalance in the way of understanding human behavior. In the positive psychology approach, it is accepted that there are problematic sides, troublesome and unpleasant aspects of life. However, the goal of positive psychology is to show that there is also the other side of the coin, to consider the human being as a whole. Everybody experiences highs and lows in life. The good aspects of life are as real as the bad aspects, and these positive aspects of life deserve scientific attention at least as much as the negative aspects. Through investigate into human strengths and positive traits, positive psychology seeks to increase the body of knowledge of the psychology literature (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Peterson, 2006).

In 1998, the theme of the meeting of the American Psychological Association have been preventive work Discovering and cultivating character strengths such as perseverance, courage, hope, optimism, faith, morality, honesty can serves as a protective barrier against mental illnesses, it was stressed during this meeting. (Seligman and Csikszentmihályi, 2000). Positive interventions are a central component of the psychotherapy process, with success in supporting attempts to prevent and treat psychopathology (Duckworth et al., 2005). However, positive psychology puts forward the argument that it is critical to comprehend these good aspects of people not just as notions that act as a buffer against problems but also as concepts that should be understood on their own (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

Positive psychology does not ignore or falsify past psychology research. Examining the psychopathological factors that prohibit a person from living a functional life and working to find remedies are also very valuable. However, placing psychopathology at the forefront is emphasized by positive psychology as an incomplete approach in the way of understanding human behaviour (Chao, 2015).

### **Positive Psychology’s View of Human Nature**

The pathology-focused approach of psychology has resulted in an unbalanced evaluation where the positive aspects are neglected in the diagnosis and treatment processes, and this has led to the perception of people as weak, helpless beings who are the victims of adverse environmental circumstances and defective genes (Peterson, 2006). Positive psychology sees people as more than all of their harmful habits, traumatic life experiences, conflicts, and negative impulses, emphasizing that focusing only on weaknesses causes a dysfunctional evaluation process. It includes addressing the strengths of positive life experiences, character traits, and examining how these might prevent dysfunction (Synder & Lopez, 2007; Duckworth et al., 2005). Positive

psychology rejects the assumption that human motivational nature is negative and emphasizes the social and moral aspects of people (Jørgensen & Eileen-Nafstad, 2004).

### **Positive Psychology, Spirituality and Religion**

Due to the advent of behaviorism and efforts to isolate psychology from philosophy and religion, psychological science's interest in religion and spirituality have waned in the middle of the twentieth century. In the second half of the twentieth century, studies on religious and spiritual functioning saw a resurgence. One of the reasons for this change is that positive structures such as forgiveness, gratitude, meaning, growth, acceptance and love gain importance. Research on both spirituality and religious belief includes research to determine the relationship between religiosity and various health indices, and methods of incorporating religiosity into mental health intervention programs. At this point, it is worth noting that religion and spirituality are closely related but different concepts (Zinnbauer, 2009). Religion includes the expression of spirituality through participation in organized communities and traditions that share these ultimate concerns. Spirituality can manifest in religious and non-religious ways. (Canda, 2009; Pargament, 2007a).

Religious beliefs and actions has had a significant impact on individuals, organizations and civilizations throughout history since they are closely involved in lives of humanbeings, death, morality, virtue, social justice, self-development, and the good life (Zinnbauer, 2009). In the historical process, religious leaders and prophets such as Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, Thomas Aquinas have asked questions about the meaning of the good life and how to achieve the good life. It is seen that the common theme of the answers developed to these questions involves serving a higher power than the individuals themselves and having a purpose. The fact that individuals serve other people and humanity as a whole feeds a sense of meaning on the way to a good life. The positive psychology approach also addresses the importance of meaningful living. It emphasizes that both worldly and spiritual pursuits have important contributions in building meaningful life (Emmons and Paloutzian, 2003, as cited in Peterson, 2006). In this context, it is possible to assert that the goals of human development and social well-being are a common issues shared by both religion and positive psychology (Zinnbauer, 2009).

According to Pargament (2007b), who has many valuable studies on the integration of spirituality into the psychotherapy process, religion and spirituality were generally ignored in the psychology literature in the 20th century, and these concepts were even discussed in relation to psychopathology. The 21st century, on the other hand, heralds great changes with the understanding of positive psychology, which also includes spirituality. Because even though everyone has a distinct definition of what is sacred,

the idea that spirituality is an element of human nature is now widely recognized. According to research, spirituality is a valuable tool that helps people get through difficult life circumstances. Positive religious coping, which means that individuals use their religious and spiritual aspects as a resource to cope with challenging and negative life events, includes a secure relationship with the God, a belief that there is great meaning in life, and a sense of spiritual connectedness with others, is a rich area of research that has significant implications for the psychological, physical, social, and spiritual well-being of individuals and families and society (Pargament et al., 2001; Gall & Younger, 2013). Many studies point to the preventive and curative effect of positive religious coping in abusive life events (Ayten et al., 2012; Sağlam-Demirkan, 2020; Spacious, 2019; Zwingmann et al., 2006; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Cummings & Pargament, 2010). Religious sources have psychological, social, and spiritual functions that strengthen the well-being of individuals, such as positive social relationships, self-regulation, self-control, transcendence, and creating a sense of meaning (Falb & Pargament, 2014). The number of studies investigating the psychological and psychosocial roles of religion and spirituality in the lives of individuals and the relationship between religiosity/spirituality and physical and mental health is increasing. In this sense, the first international contribution was made by the World Health Organization in 2006 within the framework of the quality of life research. In this research, religion and spirituality were examined as a component of quality of life. Data collected from 18 different countries showed that religion and spirituality plays an important role in quality of life in all cultural contexts (Delle Fave et al., 2013). With the positive psychology movement, research on the relationship of religious belief and spirituality not only to the preventive role of mental problems, but also to the positive emotional and psychological structures in the lives of individuals has gained importance (Joseph et al., 2006). In this context, studies with different samples reveals that religious belief and spirituality have a positive relationship with well-being, life satisfaction and resilience (Visser et al., 2010; Delle Fave et al., 2013; Lee, 2007; Reed & Neville), 2014; Killgore et al., 2020). Berthold and Ruch (2014) examined life satisfaction in non-religious and religious people. They concluded that people who practice the necessities of their religion in daily life score higher on the dimensions of positive psychology that are highly related to spirituality such as kindness, love, hope, and forgiveness and lead a more meaningful life.

## **A Look at the Basic Concepts of Positive Psychology from the Framework of Spirituality and Religion**

### **Well Being**

Happiness has historically seen as the highest state of well-being and ultimate source of motivation. Philosophers and writers have put out a wide range of perspectives

on happiness and the factors that contribute to it. Centuries ago, Aristotle wrote his treatises on happiness and the good life in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. While Rousseau associated happiness with a laden bank account, a good cook and a good digestive system, Thoreau emphasized that happiness comes from activity. The Stoics, on the other hand, examined the psychological causes of happiness. Despite the fact that happiness has a long history, for many years studies on unhappiness were the main focus of psychology research. By 1973, happiness was listed as an index term by the *Journal of Psychological Abstracts*, and experimental and theoretical research on happiness, well-being and life satisfaction began to increase. With the birth of positive psychology, happiness and well-being began to be examined with scientific methods (Lu & Shih, 1997; Diener, 2009). Well-being is examined in two dimensions, hedonic and eudemonic. In the hedonic approach, well-being is defined in terms of escaping from pain and achieving pleasure, while the eudomanaic approach examines well-being in terms of self-actualization and explains well-being through the functionality of the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Beyond just feeling good, eugenic well-being also refers to a sense of meaning and purpose (Newman & Graham, 2018). The concept of Eudomania was introduced by Aristotle. Aristotle underlined that some pleasures will injure a person and that one cannot pursue pleasure and be happy. He emphasized that individuals can achieve true happiness by living a virtuous life and fulfilling their potential (Bonniwell, 2012).

The concept of well-being is examined in the literature under the headings of subjective well-being and psychological well-being as well as hedonic and eudomanaic titles. Subjective well-being is the evaluation of one's own life from a subjective point of view. This assessment includes cognitive states or affects, such as being satisfied with one's marriage, career, and life (Diener et al., 1998). High levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, satisfaction in different areas of life such as work, marriage, career, etc. are components of subjective well-being (Diener, 2000). Psychological well-being, on the other hand, is a concept based on the psychological functioning of the individual and consists of the dimensions of self-acceptance, having purpose(s) in life, having positive interpersonal relationships, thinking and acting autonomously, environmental dominance, personal development (Ryff & Singer, 1996; Huppert, 2009). Seligman (2012) has developed a multidimensional well-being model that carries the traces of both subjective well-being and psychological well-being in its content. The PERMA well-being model, which takes its name from the initials of its dimensions, consists of positive emotions, engagement, social relations, meaning, achievement. Each of these dimensions contributes to a person's well-being (Seligman, 2012).

According to Newman and Graham (2018), it is crucial to consider the viewpoints of many global religions which play significant roles in people's lives on the ideas of happiness and well-being before studying the connections between spirituality,

religion, and well-being. The way major world religions/religious philosophies and beliefs such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism look at the concepts of happiness and well-being is often based on eudomonic happiness rather than hedonic happiness. The pursuit of hedonistic pleasure is not encouraged. It is highlighted that by creating a link with the creator, well-being can be attained in the midst of profound meaning and purpose.

Well-being is a state in which people feel healthy, happy, purposeful, peaceful, energetic, in harmony, contented, happy and safe. Well-being, which expresses the state of being in balance and harmony of the body, mind and spirit; it is closely related to spirituality (Kreitzer, 2012). In a 1984 survey by the American Research Company Gallup, individuals who said that their religion was important to them and had a significant impact on many aspects of their lives have been twice as likely to say they were “extremely happy” (Myers, 2000). Researchers who try to explain this positive relationship between faith/spirituality and well-being, and to understand why and how religion and spirituality contribute to well-being, have examined the functions of religion and spirituality such as creating meaning, providing social support, positive emotions and positive emotions within the framework of subjective, psychological and five-dimensional well-being concepts. Steger & Fraizer (2005) evaluated whether religious activities such as meditation, participation in a religious service and doing spiritual/sacred readings are related to well-being on a daily level, and whether everyday meaning in life mediates this. As a result of the research, it was seen that religious activities were related to the well-being levels of individuals, and that religious people who participated in worship, meditated or read about spirituality felt a greater meaning in their lives. In a similar study by Kashdan & Nezlek (2012), 87 individuals from various religions filled out daily reports over the course of two weeks (before going to sleep) regarding their daily spiritual experiences, sentiments and general well-being. In this research, it was found that feeling and experiencing spirituality on a daily basis is positively related to meaning, self-esteem and positive emotion in life. Religious belief and spirituality provide a rich context for social interaction and a meaningful social identity, as well as providing meaning and positive emotion (Merino, 2014). Forasmuch as, in all religions, there are worships performed in groups as well as individual worship. During these prayers, behavior for the benefit of the community is encouraged. For example, Muslims are encouraged to pray in congregation by emphasizing that the congregational prayer in Islam is more virtuous than the prayer performed alone. In addition, the individual’s behavior that will benefit the society, social solidarity is valued. In this context, participation in religious-based activities such as mawlid, funeral, and circumcision increases social communication between individuals and provides a sense of belonging (Kılavuz, 2004). People who share the same religion and worship together create a sense of sameness. This feeling also increases the commitment among group members and meets the individual’s

need to belong (Köylü, 2007). On the other hand, religion and spirituality also provide the framework for flow, which is another element of well-being. According to Csikszentmihályi et al (2014), flow is a subjective situation where people come to the point of forgetting everything but the activity while performing an activity, and immerse themselves in the activity they are performing. Although Csikszentmihályi does not analyze religious experience in detail, he argues that religious rituals produce flow (Neitz and Spickard, 1990). In a study conducted by Rufi et al. (2016), participants were opened the way for participating in a number of spiritual/religious-based activities such as Zen meditation and Catholic rites. Participants reported that they experienced flow state in these activities. In the Catholic Mass, where there is a higher level of social interaction than Zen meditation, which involves a silent practice of contemplation, a higher level of flow is experienced than meditation. This research shows that spiritual/religious rituals and practices, especially performed at the group level, offer opportunities for the experience of flow.

### **Character Strengths**

The Mayerson Foundation, which questions the functionality of traditional psychology schools and thinks that approaches based on recognizing people's strengths can be more effective, have offered a cooperation to Seligman, who brought a new breath to the field of psychology. A question by Neal Mayerson question to Seligman, have paved the way for studies of character strengths, "Do you have any hope that positive psychology can help people realize their potential?" The Values in Action (VIA) Institute have been established, Seligman began working as the institute's scientific director, and Christopher Peterson as project director. Many academics have supported the character strength studies led by Seligman and Peterson. In this context, academicians working in the field of positive psychology came together in the conference organized in cooperation with the Gallup Organization and carried out studies. Chris Peterson and his team of 55 researchers conducted content analysis of nearly 200 major religious and philosophical texts from around the world and sought to identify the values that these religions or philosophies sought to promote. In the light of this study, six basic virtues and twenty-four character strengths associated with these virtues have been identified (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). For example, the character forces named curiosity and creativity are categorized within the virtue of wisdom and love and social intelligence are categorized within the virtue of humanity (Niemic et al., 2020). One of these character strengths is spirituality, which is included in the dimension of transcendence virtue. Spirituality involves going beyond the tangible and physical world to connect with the transcendent and construct meaning in one's life and is the power to have consistent and valuable beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life. Spirituality is the most humanistic and supreme character strength among the strengths of character. Indeed, spirituality



and religiosity are linked to an interest in moral values and the pursuit of goodness (Seligman & Peterson, 2004; Niemiec et al., 2020). In a longitudinal study by Kor et al. (2019) in which the character strength of Israeli secondary school students was examined, it was concluded that spiritual character strength contributes to pro-social behavior and well-being. Selvam (2015) found that spirituality is one of the prominent character forces in dealing with bad habits. These studies point to the importance of spirituality as a character strength, both socially and personally contexts.

Throughout history, religious books and spiritual leaders have emphasized the value of the good life and positive character. Even when we take a brief look at the teachings of monotheistic religions, we see that personal virtues such as forgiveness, sacrifice, faith and loyalty are often counted among the most valuable qualities. In these teachings, the benefits that living a virtuous life will provide to individuals both in this life and in the afterlife are emphasized (Biswas-Diener, 2008). The virtues and character strengths, in which religious and philosophical texts are analyzed and classified, take their source from religious and spiritual teachings. Each character strength contains spiritual or sacred essences and contains qualities that support individuals and societies on the path to the sacred (Rye et al., 2013; Niemiec et al., 2020). When we examine the virtues and character strengths, we see that the virtue of transcendence is directly related to spirituality. It can be said that some character strengths, such as forgiveness, gratitude and enthusiasm for life, which are less clearly related to spirituality, have the potential to add richness and depth to the spiritual development of individuals (Niemiec et al., 2020). Although there are many studies on character strengths and virtues in the literature, the number of studies examining the relationship between character strengths and spirituality is quite limited. It is seen that researchers examining character strengths from the perspective of spirituality and belief focus especially on forgiveness, gratitude and hope and intervention programs aiming to develop these character strengths are high in number (Niemiec et al., 2020; Rye et al., 2013, Özcan et al., 2020). Therefore, in this part of the study, the character strengths of forgiveness, gratitude and hope and the relationship of these strengths with spirituality were examined, reminding that all twenty-four character strengths contain spiritual essences.

### **Forgiveness**

People may develop some reactions such as retaliating for the injustices they have suffered, retaliation for the harm done to them, holding grudges, denying the seriousness of the situation, showing mercy or forgiving.

It is important to stress that forgiving someone does not entail forgetting what happened, excusing them, condoning their mistreatment or allowing them to injure you again (vanOyen Witvliet, 2009). Forgiveness is examined in the literature within

the framework of the individual's self-forgiveness and interpersonal forgiveness. Self-forgiveness is the reevaluation of one's past mistakes by considering situational factors, learning from past experiences and mistakes (Biswas-Diener & Den, 2007). Self-forgiveness is an important component of self-compassion. It prevents the person from approaching himself/herself with an overly critical and judgmental attitude (O'Hanlon, 2010). In the interpersonal dimension, forgiveness is when a person voluntarily gives up negative approaches such as anger and resentment to the person or people who harm him or her and alters negative emotions into positive ones such as compassion and mercy (Enright & Human Development Study Group, 1996).

As the forgiveness literature confirms, forgiveness has many positive contributions to the individual and society, both psychologically and physiologically (Griffin et al., 2015; Peterson et al., 2017; Lawler et al., 2005; Bono, 2008). Unforgiveness threatens the health of the individual by triggering many unhealthy emotions such as grudge, hostility, anger, resentment (McCullough, 2001; Lawler et al., 2005). In his self-help book "Forgiveness is a Choice," Enright (2001) emphasized that forgiveness benefits the forgiver more than the forgiven. According to Coyle and Enright (1997), forgiveness is a spiritual process with emotion-regulating properties that help reduce negative emotions (as cited in Emmons, 2006).

Like other psychological traits, tendency to forgive vary from person to person. While some people find it easier to forgive, others could harbor resentments for a long time or seek retribution (Compton & Hoffman, 2020). Research shows that people with a strong religious identity and affiliation are more forgiving than those who do not. Forgiveness is seen as a valuable action in Christianity, Judaism and Islam, as well as in Buddhist and Hindu traditions (vanOyen witvliet, 2009). In addition to advising people to ask forgiveness from the God, all divine religions advised people to forgive each other in order to ensure healthy interpersonal relations, social peace and tranquility (Ayten, 2009). The Prophet Muhammad, the messenger of Islam, personally experienced oppression, violence and discrimination, but obeying the command given in the 199th verse of the Holy Qur'an's Araf sura -"Keep to forgiveness Oh Mohammed, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant (Quran, 7:199)"- has shown forgiveness and has been a role model to all mankind throughout his life. In various verses in the Holy Qur'an, both Allah's forgiveness is emphasized and humanbeings are encouraged to show mercy to each other (Hijr 15:49; Al-Imran 3:134; Al-Imran 3:135; Al-Imran 3:159; Shura 42:40; Shura 42:43). In addition to the Qur'an, "eleao", one of the most frequently mentioned words in the New Testament, means show mercy, while "aphiemi" means to release, to remove (Rye et al., 2000). An important concept in Hinduism, dharma refers one's proper, socially acceptable actions in regard to all living things (Holredge, 2004). For those who want to follow the Dharma path, it is essential to practice all actions such as truthfulness,

tolerance, patience, compassion. Again, karma, which appears as the law of cause and effect in Hinduism, may be related to forgiveness. Through karma, individuals face the consequences of their actions in subsequent reincarnations. Therefore, it can be assumed that a lack of forgiveness, negative emotions and unresolved anger will spread to future births (Rye et al., 2000). In a study by Denton and Martin (1998), an experienced clinician sample was assessed for their understanding of the meaning of forgiveness, phases in the treatment process and proper therapeutic use of it. It was concluded that there was no significant difference between clinicians with different religious orientations. This similarity may indicate that there is a fundamental idea of forgiveness that is universally accepted among religions. Forgiveness is a concept that pervades every culture and religion.

### **Hope**

Hope can be simply defined as having expectations that things will turn out in the best way and making positive wishes. It appears as an important construct in positive psychology (Luthans & Jensen, 2002; Reichard et al., 2013). Hope, which has a unique power to mobilize individuals, groups, organizations and communities, is, according to Synder (2000), not just a passive excitement that arises in the dark moments of life, but a cognitive process by which individuals actively pursue their goals (as cited in Taraghi et al., 2017). In psychology literature hope, which is examined under different headings such as an emotion, a positive motivational state, a cognitive process, appears as a character strength in positive psychology (Leontopoulou, 2020). People with the strength of hope are of the opinion that the future will bring positive things with a desire strong enough to overcome difficulties. Various studies have shown that individuals with high hope levels are successful in overcoming obstacles and finding various ways to reach the goals they set for themselves (Cheavens et al., 2006) and their intention to seek help is high (McDermott et al., 2017). In addition, studies have shown that hope is an important predictor of mental health and well-being (Slezackova & Kraff, 2016; Reichard et al., 2016).

Hope is a concept that is addressed in different fields of social sciences such as philosophy, anthropology, behavioral sciences, as well as in theology and religious studies (Slezackova & Kraff, 2016).

The sense of hope that arises from the ability to imagine, that is, to think beyond what is in the here and now, is fueled by faith in a greater power or God. Human beings face the reality of death in the life cycle. The idea that there is a life beyond death evokes in people a sense of hope for those who await them at the end of life. Religions have supported this belief and hope with belief in the hereafter since the past (Selvam & Poulson, 2012). The word hope appears in one of every seven pages of the Bible. St. Paul, an important figure in Christianity, commemorated hope with the concepts

of faith and love and placed it in an important position. Not only Christians, but also Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, African Ifa, Native Americans, and Australian Aborigines draw their “spiritual light” from their hope-driven belief systems (Scioli, 2007). Especially in challenging life experiences, it has been observed that hope shows its presence in relation to spirituality. Considering that spirituality is related to assigning meaning to life, it is obvious that when individuals encounter challenging life events in their lives, their spiritual aspects will feed hope. As a matter of fact, research indicates that hope and spirituality are related and that spirituality leads to the flowering of hope (Ottaviani et al., 2014; Souza et al., 2017; Harley & Hunn, 2005).

### **Gratitude**

Gratitude, one of the main focal points of positive psychology research is a typical emotional reaction given by individuals for the benefit of a gift given or a favor they see (Bono et al., 2004). Gratitude, which involves noticing and appreciating the positive things in life, has two dimensions: worldly and transcendental. The worldly dimension involves people giving thanks to one another, while the transcendent dimension is associated with the individual’s gratitude to the divinity. Seligman stated that people who are satisfied with their past lives, optimistic about the future, and happy in the present will have a high level of well-being. Gratitude helps the individual become aware of the positive things that have happened to them in the past, which makes the individual feel happy in the present and optimistic about the future (Power, 2016). In addition, gratitude helps regulate, consolidate and strengthen interpersonal relationships (Emmons & Mishra, 2012).

In the great monotheistic religions of the world, the concept of gratitude permeates texts, prayers and teachings. God is thought of as the source of goodness in the world. People feel indebted to him for the blessings and gifts he has given. One of the integral parts of worship and prayers in these religions is gratitude and gratitude is a universal religious feeling. Believers thank for the God’s blessings and mercy through prayer, worship and service to others. In addition to monotheistic religions, gratitude is a character tendency that is also valued in Buddhism and Hinduism. The Buddha says that gratitude is a fundamental characteristic of the noble person (Emmons and Shelton, 2002; Emmons, 2005; Emmons & Mishra, 2012). Peterson and Seligman (2004) have stated that individuals who engage in religious activities will have more intense feelings of gratitude. In this context, Wirtz et al. (2014) examined the relationship between gratitude and spirituality in a theoretical and empirical framework. As a result of this examination, it is stated that religious contexts provide fertile ground for the expression of gratitude, as feeling grateful to the Creator and thanking him through prayer is encouraged in many great religions. They also emphasized that religious rituals and practices in many religions increase

people's awareness of the positive things in their lives. It is thought that people who perform their worship regularly realize the goodness in their lives, and they thank the God (Wirtz et al., 2014). Lambert et al. (2009) conducted an experimental study to investigate the connection between prayer and gratitude. The researchers came to the conclusion that students' regular prayer practice boosted their sense of thankfulness and appreciation as well as their awareness of the good aspects of their own lives.

## **Optimism**

The concept of learned helplessness has been one of the most studied concepts in the psychology literature since it was discovered, and it has influenced psychologists' thoughts on the relationship between mind, brain and behavior. On the contrary of learned helplessness, optimism is one of the main topics of positive psychology, which breathe new life into the science of psychology which focused on identifying and correcting people's weaknesses (Schwartz, 2000). People's expectations for the future are the foundation of the dictionary definitions of optimism and pessimism. People that are optimistic anticipate wonderful things happening to them whereas pessimists anticipate terrible things. When it comes to how people approach and handle issues, pessimists and optimists have different approaches. People who look to the future with optimism tend to put forth effort and use effective problem-solving methods, even when dealing with serious problems. Some people believe that being optimistic means ignoring the drawbacks or dangers in life and concentrating entirely on the positives. This viewpoint, nevertheless, is untrue. Those that are optimistic consider the risks. However, they are not concerned with matters that are unimportant or unlikely to have an impact on them. They wait to display their behavioral responses until truly meaningful threats arise. Additionally, they take active steps to improve their quality of life. In contrast to pessimists, who have a propensity to give up easily, they are persistent in achieving their objectives and exhibit a task-oriented approach (Carver & Scheier, 2002). This is due to their confidence that they can achieve their goals. People who are confident that they will eventually achieve the result they want persevere even in the face of difficulties (Carver et al., 2010).

Research shows that optimism is closely related to both mental and physical health. In a study conducted by Shapira and Mongrain (2010), in which optimism exercise was applied within the scope of positive psychology intervention, it was seen that the depression level of the participants decreased. Rasmussen et al. (2009), carried out a meta-analysis study to determine the strength of the relationship between optimism and physical health. The results of 83 studies that examined a wide range of physical health and illness situations, including mortality rates, cardiovascular diseases, cancer diseases, immune system have shown that optimism is a crucial physical health indicator. In another study on the relationship between optimism and psychological well-being, optimism was found to be positively related to psychological well-being (Jahanara, 2017).

Religious belief can foster optimism and hope with its function of creating meaning for people experiencing existential problems. For followers of the divine faiths like Islam, Christianity and Judaism to have hope for their afterlife, they must meet requirements like faith and worship (Bennett, 2001). Despite the scriptures' narratives of people who were punished for not believing in the God, religions provides reasons to its followers to be optimistic by emphasizing that the God's love, guidance, and protection are abundant, unconditional and continuous. It is highlighted that those who live a life of faith and makes positive contributions to life will receive eternal rewards in the Hereafter (Mattis et al., 2003). In studies on optimism, religiosity, and spirituality, optimism is found to be associated with a supportive and loving relationship with God (Mattis et al., 2003), positive religious coping (Warren et al., 2015), and religious commitment (Dember & Brooks, 1989). In an experimental study conducted by Koenig et al. (2015) examining the effects of standard psychotherapy with optimism-based religious psychotherapy intervention, it was concluded that that both approaches increased optimism, but among the study subjects, those who were more religious were more optimistic and experienced a significantly greater increase in optimism during the psychotherapy process than those who were less religious.

## **Resilience**

Throughout their lives, while sometimes people face minor daily problems, every so often they face serious problems and negative life events. The life path is not always straight. Life is full of uncertainties, bumps and bends are encountered from time to time. We see that some people are able to cope with these difficulties and even come out stronger from these difficulties and improve themselves after negative experiences. Going through negative life events can help a person learn how to deal with life's challenges, overcome them, learn from negative experiences and experience positive transformation. This situation is examined in the literature with the concept of psychological resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Hunter-Hernández et al., 2015). Resilience refers to the process of adapting to challenging life events such as troubles and traumas (Luthar et al., 2014).

Researchers working on resilience have examined risk factors and protective factors that may mitigate the harmful consequences of adverse life situations. Spirituality and religion have been regarded as crucial protective resources that can help or strengthen an individual's resistance to adversity (Smith et al., 2012). Studies reveal that there is a positive relationship between spirituality and resilience (Shelton et al., 2020; Batmaz & Meral, 2022; Rahwamati, 2014; Carneiro et al., 2019). According to O'Grady et al. (2016), negative life experiences and traumatic experiences activate spiritual processes for many people. A study by Salloum and Lewis (2010) indicates that spirituality plays a central role in the resilience of African-American families

affected by storm Katrina. Relying on a higher spiritual power encouraged survivors to find purpose in their struggles. It has been seen that praying, worshiping and relying on a higher spiritual power are the best coping strategies (as cited in Graber & Carabine, 2015). Hunter-Hernández et al. (2015) states that spirituality is a resource that promotes compliance and resilience to improve quality of life in patients with cancer or other chronic diseases. According to Lsyne and Wachholtz (2010), religion and spirituality are two basic meaning-building methods that affect a person's ability to cope, endure and accept illness and pain. Performing religious activities and worshipping increases an individual's capacity to tolerate challenging life events.

The individuals' religious belief could help them view their difficult current situation from a different angle. In all divine religions, a meaning is attributed to pain. Not everyone views pain as something to be avoided. There is a viewpoint that asserts adverse life experiences have instructional value and believers should take something positive out from them. Additionally, religion promotes proactive problem-solving by advocating accepting unresolved points and turning to the God through the problem. In a Hittite prayer, the phrase "God, please give me the power to alter the things I can change, to accept the things I cannot change, and to understand the difference between the two" highlights precisely this phenomenon (Dein & Kimter, 2014).

### **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is conceptualized as a path to well-being in the positive psychology approach (Kashdan & Ciarrochi, 2013). Mindfulness involves accepting ambiguity of daily life, inhibiting our tendency to maintaining our automatic behaviors and letting go of the urge to judge oneself and others (Synder & Lopez, 2007). According to Shapiro et al. (2002), awareness is a discipline of consciousness. It is much more than meditation, despite the fact that it is frequently connected with it. Being aware is a state of being. It involves being present with our body, minds, and experiences in each passing second. According to Kashdan and Ciarrochi (2013), awareness is the ability to observe and experience one's emotions objectively, without being enmeshed in or associating with negative feelings, despite the propensity to avoid painful thoughts and emotions. Over-identification leads to a definite and permanent perception of transient events. For example, the expression "I am a failure" indicates over-identification, while "I have failed" is an expression of awareness. Individuals practicing mindfulness shifts their attention from past regrets, losses and concerns about the future to the present.

With the rise of the positive psychology, the science of psychology has adopted a holistic perspective in which positive qualities are also examined with scientific methods. This change from the pathology model to the health model has led to the examination of different traditions and practices such as mindfulness meditation and

yoga, which have been used for thousands of years to better understand human potential (Shapiro et al., 2002). Mindfulness meditation, which is based on Buddhist philosophies and Eastern traditions, was included in the psychotherapy process about 40 years ago with the pioneering work of Kabatt-Zinn in order to increase mental health and well-being (Hamilton et al., 2006; Allen et al., 2021). Mindfulness meditation includes specific practices, exercises designed to enhance mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2002). The positive effect of mindfulness exercises and interventions on positive psychology variables such as optimism, well-being, and positive emotions has been demonstrated by various studies (Malboeuf-Hurtubise, et al., 2018; Huppert & Johnson, 2010).

Mindfulness enables us to experience the moment we are in and to reconnect with our spiritual essence (Bien & Bien, 2002). Mindfulness includes meditation practices that are based on accepting and observing negative emotions and thoughts rather than avoiding them. Acceptance is also an important element of meditation. Pargament (2007a) has linked mindfulness to spirituality, arguing that this element—the ability to accept painful thoughts, feelings, and desires—is associated with the behavior of accepting one’s own limits and finitude, relinquishing control to a larger power domain/transcendent. There are also diverse studies in the literature that emphasize the relationship of mindfulness with spirituality and religiosity (Aydın, 2019; Lazaridou & Pentaris, 2016; Ghorbani et al., 2016). Trammel (2018) implemented a mindfulness intervention developed based on Christianity, arguing that mindfulness interventions can be applied within the framework of Christianity and other religions in addition to Buddhist-based mindfulness practices. Following these practices, it was concluded that the mindfulness levels of the participants increased and the stress levels decreased. Oman (2009) has shown that the mindfulness/meditation practices inspired by the Prophet Muhammad’s habits of contemplation and meditation increase compassion, altruism, empathy, forgiveness and self-efficacy (as cited in York el Karam, 2018).

## **Positive Psychotherapy**

### **What is Positive Psychotherapy?**

Positive psychotherapy is a therapeutic approach based on the hypothesis that building positive emotions, strengths and meaning is effective in treating psychopathology and the principles of general positive psychology (Rashid, 2009; Rashid, 2015). In positive psychotherapy approach, even patients with severe psychopathological issues are thought to prefer improving their lives to getting rid of bothersome symptoms. Clients want not only to reduce negative emotions such as sadness and anxiety, but also to fill their lives with positive emotions such as satisfaction, happiness and joy. Therefore, positive psychotherapists emphasizes that the therapy setting is not only a place where anger, frustration, jealousy and



anxiety are addressed, discussed and treated but also where positive qualities such as hope, optimism, gratitude, compassion, contentment, humility and emotional, social intelligence are examined (Rashid, 2015).

### **Therapist-Client Relationship**

An unconditionally supportive counseling environment is essential in positive psychotherapy (Chao, 2015). Clients who apply to psychotherapy generally are more likely to bring problems and negative situations to the fore. For this reason, in positive psychotherapy, it is essential that the therapist uses basic techniques such as unconditional acceptance and empathetic listening, as well as drawing the attention of the clients to the positive emotions, structures and strengths in their lives. While the traditional therapy approach examines and evaluates which weaknesses of the client cause the existing problem, positive psychotherapy considers which strengths the client might use to cope with their problems (Rashid, 2009). The therapist looks for opportunities to identify and reflect on the client's strengths in positive psychotherapy, where the therapeutic relationship is central. Negative states are balanced by positives. For example, the therapist may bring up the concept of post-traumatic growth while intervening in a traumatic experience with an empathetic approach (Rashid, 2015).

### **Therapy Process**

The process of positive psychotherapy can be divided into three stages. The first stage focuses on discovering the individual's strengths so that the individual can be considered from a balanced and multiple perspective. Based on these strengths, therapeutic targets are determined. The middle stage is the stage in which studies are carried out at the point of developing positive emotions and coping with negative emotions effectively. The final stage includes exercises aimed at developing positive relationships, meaning and purpose (Rashid, 2015). The ultimate goal is to assist the client in getting from where they are to where they want to be, as well as to improve their overall well-being. In the pursuit of this goal, the therapist is not required to examine every detail of the client's pathology or history. During the process, the client's problems, therapeutic goals, the resources, strengths and abilities that the client needs to use and develop in order to achieve the desired therapeutic results are examined (Burns, 2017). Rashid (2015) has suggested topics that can be addressed in each session and exercises that can be done in the process of positive psychotherapy. In the first sessions, the PERMA model of well-being is examined, it is discussed that the absence of which elements of the model in client's life may cause psychological problems and the strengths of the individual are investigated. The following sessions focus on themes such as forgiveness, hope and optimism, gratitude, resilience, meaning and purpose, which are common themes of both spirituality

and positive psychology. For example, in a session where the concept of gratitude is discussed, the client is asked to write a letter containing the expression of gratitude. At this point, if working with a spiritual/religious oriented client, spiritual/religious elements can be incorporated into the process of expressing gratitude. In addition, when working with spiritually oriented clients, scales and inventories that contain items that deal with both religious and non-religious forms of spirituality can be used to evaluate the spiritual well-being of individuals in therapy process. Scales containing items targeting the individual's spirituality such as the "Authentic Happiness Inventory", "Happiness Approaches Survey", "Meaning in Life Survey", "VIA Character Forces Inventory" on the [www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu](http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu) website created by Martin Seligman can be used for these purposes (Canda, 2009).

O'Hanlon and Bertolino (2012) suggested that spirituality has three components: connection, compassion, contribution, and they developed a positive psychotherapy exercise that includes these three components. The exercise consists of questions in which the spiritual side of the client can be evaluated and addressed in the therapy session.

**Connection:**

Most religious or spiritual approaches help people connect with something greater beyond themselves. The questions in this category have been prepared to help people discover the sources of spiritual power and support in their lives.

- Do you have a less ego-driven purpose in your life than your concerns like money and status? Do you have any spiritual resources that you can connect with?
- When you feel exhausted, bad, distressed etc. do you have any opportunity to connect to a spiritual source? These sources may include the following elements:
  1. Connection to one's soul / spirit / deep self / core self
  2. Connection to one's physical self/body/senses
  3. Connection with another entity (human or animal/pet)
  4. Connection to a group or community
  5. Connection through art (creating or observing/participating in art created by others)
  6. Connection to nature (and a sense of being part of something bigger than yourself)
  7. Connection to God / one's higher power / universe and a greater sense of meaning or purpose

**Compassion:**

This category contains questions aimed at softening the questioning and critical attitudes of individuals towards themselves and others.

- Does your life contain an atmosphere of compassion? How can you create or develop an atmosphere of compassion and kindness?
- Think of the most serene, compassionate, or wise person you know. What would be his/her perspective on this situation you are experiencing now? How would that person deal with this situation?
- Remember a time when you judged or criticized someone, then softened or became more compassionate. How did you transition from a critical attitude to a compassionate one? What changed after making this change? Can you apply any of these to your current situation?

**Contribution:**

When we connect with a transcendent power beyond our own self, when we have deep purpose, we feel a desire to help other people and contribute to the world. This category allows the actions that do not directly benefit the client, the altruistic attitude to be addressed in the session.

- You can do something to contribute to world and society to reduce social injustice. For example, donating money to a charity, praying for someone in distress, volunteering for a charity. What can you do to contribute to the world you live in?

### **Spirituality-Focused Positive Psychotherapy Practices**

In the positive psychology approach, psychotherapists benefit from interventions such as asking questions, giving confidence, listening and applying tests in order to reduce the problems experienced by the client, increase their functionality, well-being and improve them to the extent of their potential (Chao, 2015). A one-size-fits-all approach is avoided in positive psychotherapy, and it is emphasized that each client's requirements may vary. Depending on the client's characteristics, positive psychology interventions are modified in terms of their form, structure and order (Rashid, 2009). Considering that spirituality constitutes an important part of the lives of many individuals, spirituality can be included in the psychotherapy process by evaluating the needs of the client. It is thought that it will be beneficial to benefit from spiritual practices at both group and individual level, especially when working with clients whose character strengths are characterized by spirituality and transcendence. There are experimental studies in the literature that include spiritual and religious interventions in positive psychotherapy practices, both in individual and group sessions. For example, in a study conducted by Fallah et al. (2011) spiritually focused interventions were given to breast cancer survivors. The group was consist of women who recovered. The first week of the 8-week process was devoted to contemplation and meditation. In the second week, prayer was discussed and the types of prayer were defined as a way to connect with the God. The agenda of the third week was the subject of trust in God. The effect of trust on hope and treatment process was discussed. In the fourth week, patience was emphasized, patience was defined in the Islamic framework, and the importance of patience in problem solving was discussed. Repentance formed the agenda of the fifth week, and God's forgiveness was discussed. The sixth session covered the topic of forgiveness. What it means to forgive is discussed, and the contributions of forgiveness to the life of the individual both in this world and in the hereafter was examined. The main theme of the seventh week was gratitude. The concept of gratitude in Islam was studied. Group members were encouraged to focus on and be grateful for the positive aspects of life. Different ways of being grateful were discussed. In the eighth week, the topic of the agenda was altruism. In this session, the place of helping the people in Islam was discussed. At the end of the process the hope, happiness and life satisfaction levels of the participants increased. The effect of spiritual/religious interventions on spiritual well-being and anxiety was examined by Elham et al. (2015) on 66 patients undergoing treatment in the coronary care unit. Interventions were determined on the basis of the spiritual needs of the patients. Participants of the intervention group received 60 to 90-minute spiritual/religious based intervention sessions for at least 3 days from hospitalization to discharge. Interventions included 30 minutes of caregiving, giving them hope, talking to them about spiritual experiences, strengthening relationships with family members and important people in their lives, providing them with opportunities to

worship and pray. The patients were given small booklets containing valuable quotes from religious scholars and world scientists about hope, generosity and forgiveness. As a result of the research, the subjective well-being levels of the participants increased and their anxiety levels decreased. Noferesti & Tavakol (2021) examined the effect of positive individual psychotherapy intervention based on “belief in divine goodness” on depression. After sessions with a spiritual/religious dimension, clients’ depressive symptoms decreased. An increase was observed in the levels of happiness, life satisfaction and sense of meaning in life. In another experimental study conducted by Lambert et al. (2010) which study group was university students, participants were given the task of praying for a friend, praying about any topic or thinking positive thoughts about a friend every day for 4 weeks. It was concluded that the participants who prayed for their friends reported more forgiveness than the other two participant groups. These studies point to the high effectiveness of positive psychology interventions in which the spiritual dimension is included. In this context, it can be said that the use of spiritual/religious-based positive psychotherapy practices will provide functional therapeutic results, especially when working with clients who are fed spiritually/religiously.

### **Conclusion**

Religion and spirituality were mostly overlooked in psychology literature during the 20th century and these ideas were even associated with psychopathology. With the positive psychology approach, significant developments have occurred in the 21st century. Positive psychology has given researchers and practitioners a new perspective on human beings, and thanks to positive psychology, previously neglected studies on religion and spirituality have gained momentum. Today, it is widely accepted that spirituality is an important resource that strengthens the well-being of individuals and provides a sense of meaning, every person has a spiritual aspect and seeks for the sacred although the way they define the sacred in different ways (Shafranske & Sperry 2007; Pargament, 2007a).

Traditional approaches focused on psychopathology suggest that the individual’s ability to continue his life in a functional way is possible by addressing his weaknesses, problems and solving them (Dawson & Austin, 2014). Positive psychology studies, which were pioneered by Martin Seligman and have gained popularity recently, focus on the positive and qualities of people by noting the shortcomings of traditional approaches that emphasize problems, diagnoses and treatments. It attempts to assist individuals in leading happier and more fruitful lives as well as in identifying and comprehending their personal talents and virtues (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Synder & Lopez, 2007). In this context, spirituality is considered as a character strength in the positive psychology approach. The spiritual aspect of the individual

can be used as a resource in the psychotherapy process. Additionally, all religions and the prophets who serve as their representatives of these religions refer to things like the characteristics of a decent life and a virtuous person on the path to leading a dignified life. In this perspective, it is possible to assert that positive psychology and religions share common issues at the social and individual level (Zinnbauer, 2009). When the literature is examined, there are a few studies showing that these interventions, in which spirituality is included in positive psychotherapy practices, are positively effective (Lambert et al., 2010; Fallah et al., 2011; Elham et al., 2011; Noferesti and Tavakol, 2022). In Turkey, although there are current efforts to address the spiritual aspects of the client while working with spiritually oriented clients, it is thought that spirituality and religious orientation are neglected in positive psychology-based interventions. It is thought that this study, which examines the intersection points of the positive psychology approach with spirituality and the interventions used when working with spiritually oriented clients, within the framework of the relevant literature, will provide practitioners and researchers with a different perspective and form the basis for future research. As stated in the study, spirituality, in addition to being considered as a character strength in the positive psychology approach, has an important place with its functions such as a being a resource that the individual can feed on in difficult times and an being effective coping strategy. When the basic concepts of positive psychology are examined on spiritual/religious basis, it can be said that concepts such as well-being, optimism, mindfulness and resilience are common concepts of positive psychology and spirituality. In addition, positive psychology has done some valuable work in grounding the concept of character strengths in philosophical, cultural and religious traditions. Moreover, if an effective interdisciplinary dialogue can be established between these distinctive research traditions to deepen our understanding of the complexities of the human psyche, the science of psychology will have much to gain and offer. This paper has been a modest attempt to contribute to this interdisciplinary effort.

The goal of this study is to offer a broad framework for the relationship between positive psychology and spirituality. The limitations of the research are that the spiritual dimension of each of the character strengths is not examined and that spiritually oriented positive psychotherapy interventions are minimally addressed. In future studies, each main topic in this study can be examined in more detail. Spiritually oriented positive psychotherapy interventions can be explained with case examples. In addition, the effects of positive psychotherapy sessions with spiritually oriented clients, in which spirituality is addressed, can be examined using an experimental design in the presence of cases.

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Original Article

# The Relationship of Art Therapy to Spirituality

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## Abstract

Art therapy is based on the idea that creative artistic processes facilitate repair and healing and is a form of psychotherapy where image creation and object usage are the primary forms of expression and communication. Although art therapy's emergence as a profession is relatively recent, the roots of using art for healing are as old as the symbolic rituals ancient cultures used in religious ceremonies. Art therapy also spread universally, from mummy's ornaments in Egypt to Tibetan monks' sand mandalas. The ancient intertwined history of the relationship between art and spirituality as well as between spirituality and healing has aroused curiosity about the nature of the relationship between art therapy and spirituality. Based on this curiosity, the article will address within its scope the definition of art therapy and its early roots, followed by discussion on the relationship between art therapy and spirituality with regard to six propositions. By considering the close old friendship art has with therapy and spirituality in the context of art therapy, the study can contribute to the currently relevant literature on both art therapy and spirituality, as well as to the theoretical framework of spiritually oriented practices in art therapy.

## Keywords:

Art therapy • Art • Spirituality • Healing • Therapy

## Sanat Terapisinin Maneviyatla İlişkisi

### Öz

Sanat terapisi, temel felsefesi yaratıcı sanatsal sürecin onarım ve iyileşmeyi kolaylaştırdığı fikrine dayanan; imgeler ve nesnelere yaratmanın birincil ifade ve iletişim biçimi olarak kullanıldığı bir psikoterapi biçimidir. Sanat terapisinin, sanat ve terapi disiplinlerinin birleşmesiyle tanımlanmış bir meslek olarak ortaya çıkışı nispeten yeni olmasına rağmen, iyileşmek için sanatı kullanmanın kökleri kadim kültürlerin dini törenlerde kullandığı sembolik ritüeller kadar eskidir. Ayrıca Mısır'daki mumya süslemelerinden Tibet rahiplerinin kum mandalalarına kadar evrensel bir yayılım gösterir. Bir yanda sanat ve maneviyat, diğer yanda maneviyat ve şifa arasındaki ilişkinin eski ve iç içe geçmiş tarihi, sanat terapisi ile maneviyat arasındaki ilişkinin yapısı ve niteliğine dair merak uyandırmaktadır. Bu meraktan hareketle makale kapsamında sanat terapisinin tanımına, erken dönem köklerine değinilecek ardından altı önerme üzerinden sanat terapisinin maneviyatla ilişkisi tartışılacaktır. Sanatın terapi ve maneviyatla olan eski ve yakın dostluğunu sanat terapisi bağlamında ele alarak, çalışmanın, hem günümüzde oldukça ilgi gören sanat terapisi ve maneviyat literatürlerine hem de sanat terapisinde manevi yönelimli uygulamaların teorik zeminine katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmüştür.

## Anahtar Kelimeler:

Sanat terapi • Sanat • Maneviyat • Şifa • Terapi

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The British Art Therapy Association (BAAT, 2019) defines art therapy as “a form of psychotherapy that uses the creation of images and objects as a primary form of expression and communication.” Unlike most adults, children cannot easily express themselves verbally. Adults, on the other hand, can use words to intellectualize and distract from their emotions. Art therapy enables the client to overcome these cumbersome barriers to self-expression using simple art materials (Canadian Art Therapy Association [CATA], 2019). Edwards (2004, p. 8) also mentioned the limitations of words as follows:

Words are not only the main tools through which we exchange information about the world we live in, but for most people they are the main tools they have for expressing and communicating their experience of that world. However, human experience cannot be completely reduced to words. Expressing what it feels like to love or hate, be traumatized or depressed can involve much more than struggling to find the ‘right’ words. Some experiences and emotional states are beyond words.

Art therapy is based on the idea that the creative artistic process facilitates repair and healing and that thoughts and feelings are a form of nonverbal communication (Malchiodi, 2005). The act of creating allows one to have a say in how they shape and respond to the suffering and hope inside them. By creating art, one participates in self-creation (Moon, 2001, p. 37). The neuroscientist Damasio (2010) views art as a gift of evolutionary selection that helps humans better endure pain. Thus, the mechanisms of action and symbolic functions of the brain that are active during artistic creation, which are complex and have yet to be deciphered, are actively involved in maintaining one’s homeostasis along with many other physiological functions of the brain (as cited in Colette, 2019, p. 6). Visual and symbolic expression gives voice to experience and strengthens individual and social transformation (American Art Therapy Association [AATA], 2019). Like other forms of psychotherapy and counseling, art therapy is used in a wide variety of settings with children, adults, families, and groups to promote personal development (Edwards, 2004; Malchiodi, 2012). Clients who are referred to an art therapist do not need to have previous experience or skill in the arts. The art therapist is not concerned with making an aesthetic or diagnostic evaluation of the client’s images. Practitioners’ overall goal is to enable the client to change and grow on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and enabling environment (BAAT, 2019).

Ulman (2001, p. 17), founder of the art therapy newsletter and one of the pioneers of art therapy in America, viewed art therapy as a new field born of art and therapy as its parents. According to her, therapy involves “procedures designed to aid positive changes in personality or life that will outlast the session itself,” with art being “a way of exploring both the self and the world and establishing a relationship between the two.” When combining the individual aims of art and therapy in art therapy, whether art or therapy as the parents will dominate is a matter of debate. For example, theorists such as Adrian Hill and Edith Kramer who think art should be a priority adopted the



art as therapy approach, while theorists such as Margaret Naumberg who think that therapy should be a priority adopted the art psychotherapy approach (Edwards, 2004; Junge & Asawa, 1994; Malchiodi, 2007; Rubin, 2010; Ulman, 2001).

While the expression of art can be used as another form of language in therapy, the act of making art taps into the universal human potential of creativity, a capacity related to health and wellness. Art therapy essentially believes that all individuals have the capacity to express themselves creatively (Malchiodi, 2012; Rubin, 2010). The idea that all individuals have the capacity for creative expression is also a familiar idea from Moreno, the founder of psychodrama group therapy. Moreno felt that individuals are born creative and spontaneous but that this creativity and spontaneity decrease over time through the effect of the cultural conserves<sup>1</sup> one is exposed to while growing up in society and are replaced by anxiety and other pathologies. In connection with this, healing becomes possible when one reconnects with their spontaneity and regains their creativity. Creativity and spontaneity are both a result of recovery and facilitators that provide recovery (Baletner & Blatner, 1988; Moreno, 1987). Therefore, art therapy states the product to be less important than the relevant therapeutic process and brings the therapist's focus to the therapeutic needs of the person for self-expression, not specifically the aesthetic values of making art (Malchiodi, 2012). Malchiodi (2005) summarized the advantages of art therapy as follows:

- 1- It offers a different form of communication; While many therapy approaches rely on words to convey meaning, art therapy offers the client the opportunity to express the inner material it brings to the client through visual images. Making an image, whether drawing, painting or sculpture, is a visual thinking experience and can be an additional source of information for both client and therapist.
- 2- It is experiential and incorporates the body into its work; Whether in the form of a simple charcoal drawing or a more elaborate painting or sculpture, art-making is experiential because it uses the senses of touch, sight and, to some extent, sound and smell. It adds another dimension to verbal therapy as it is a method that includes the body, or it can be used as a stand-alone intervention according to the aims of the treatment.
- 3- Despite the abstract processes of psychotherapy, there is a concrete product; art expression offers therapy a tangible and lasting product. Therefore, the artistic product also functions as a transitional object in that it is a concrete recording of the therapy and a reminder of the client-therapist relationship between sessions. A drawing or picture can be viewed, cited and discussed immediately or in a subsequent session.

<sup>1</sup> Cultural conserve is a term used by J. L. Moreno to express how a creative and spontaneous action freezes in time and loses much of its original significance and vitality and in a sense becomes an idol (Bannister, 2005). Works of art, books, technological inventions, strict moral values, and psychological and physical formulas become idols that communities worship and that take people out of the moment and away from creativity and spontaneity (Altinay, 2009).

4- It functions as a facilitating intermediary between the therapist and the client for clients who have difficulty talking about difficult issues; For some people, looking at a drawing with a therapist may be easier than making eye contact with each other. Talking about an image and its meaning may be easier than talking directly to the therapist about sensitive or complex issues.

5- Catharsis; Art expression helps in releasing emotions.

In addition, Storr supports Malchiodi's emphasis on catharsis with the idea that creativity provides a means to come to terms with or find symbolic solutions to the internal tensions and separations that all people suffer in varying degrees (as cited in Edwards, 2004, p. 4)

So far, the study has addressed the definition and scope of art therapy. The next section will examine the modern and ancient roots of art therapy then discuss the relationship between art therapy and spirituality.

### **The Roots of Art Therapy**

Although the emergence of art therapy as a defined profession is relatively recent, the idea of using art for healing has ancient and universal roots (Malchiodi, 2006). Whether the prehistoric artists who painted animals or carved fertility figures on the walls of caves,<sup>2</sup> Egyptians who painted protective symbols on mummy boxes, Tibetan Buddhists who created sand mandalas, the creators of African ritual masks, the Byzantines who painted sacred icons, or Ethiopian artists who painted healing scrolls, all of them represent the historical precursors of modern art therapy (McNiff, 1992; Rubin, 2010).

The ancient roots of the use of art in healing practices went through many more modern stages before taking its present form. The early philosophical roots of art therapy are based on romanticism, expressionism, and surrealism (Edwards, 2004). These philosophical movements were reflected in artists' works as giving up the representation of the outer world for the mysterious goal of expressing the inner world and setting out to reflect the reality of the soul rather than reproduce the outer reality as had been done before. While these were happening in philosophical thoughts and art movements, the environment had become well-prepared for the discovery of the unconscious in the world of psychology and for the birth of art therapy with the theories of Freud and Jung (Rubin, 2010). This was followed by an interest in patient art. Hans Prinzhorn, who observed the curative effect of art on those made to linger in mental hospitals, which were a kind of prison where mentally ill people were cloistered with the belief at the end of the 19th century being that they were

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2 For example, the Chauvet cave in France and cave paintings from 36,000 years ago, or the Cueva de las Manos cave in Argentina and hand drawings from 13,500 years ago.

untreatable, was important for the history of art therapy in his extensive work where he transformed the art pieces he'd collected from many hospitals into the *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (Edwards, 2004). ; Lomas, 2001; Prinzhorn, 1972). People in the turmoil of a psychotic break who are at risk of losing touch with reality often feel compelled to create something as a way of coping with their confusion (Rubin, 2010).

The modern history of art therapy is told through England and America, the two countries where it emerged almost simultaneously (Edwards, 2004; Hogan, 2001; Junge & Asawa, 1994; Wood, 1997). In England, the concept of art therapy was first used in 1942 by artist Adrian Hill (known as the grandfather of art therapy) when he described a new form of distraction therapy. During his treatment for tuberculosis, Hill observed the healing effect of art in its contribution to relieving the patient's morbid introspection (Hill, 1951). The journalist Lucas expressed this as follows:

The disease has served to bring him in touch with a deeper source of inspiration for many that can only be reached through neurosis, and he has entered a period in which he is doing better than ever before." (as cited in Hogan, 2001, p. 133)

Wood (1997) classified this as part of the early developmental period of art therapy spanning from 1930-1959. This was followed by the second phase covering the period of 1960-1979 when the anti-psychiatry movement and humanist approaches had become prominent and the British Art Therapists Association had been founded. In the following third stage from 1980-1999, professional practice became more established in the public sector, and the dominance of psychoanalytic and group systems theory was striking. This was followed by the fourth contemporary stage, which also covers the present. At the same time that the concept of art therapy was first mentioned in England, art therapy emerged in America with Margaret Naumburg, who has been called the grandmother of art therapy. Naumburg was a psychoanalyst who viewed art expression as a way of manifesting unconscious images and as a form of symbolic conversation with the client; she is considered one of the first practitioners to define art therapy as a separate form of psychotherapy (Junge & Asawa, 1994; Malchiodi, 2005).

Through Hill and Naumburg as the pioneers of art therapy in two different geographies, two main directions or parallel lines can be mentioned with regard to art therapy (Waller, 2003): art as therapy and art psychotherapy. Art psychotherapy was represented by Naumburg, who was also the founder of the Walden school, and attaches importance to the verbal analysis of the art product produced in the creation process. With the contribution of her psychoanalyst roots, her art therapy model is based on releasing the subconscious through the spontaneous expression of art, the transference relationship between the client and the therapist, and the interpretation of these two. Naumburg viewed art as a form of symbolic speech emanating from the unconscious like dreams, one that is spontaneously aroused and understood through free association, and always respected the artist's own

interpretations. Thus, art as the so-called royal path to unconscious symbolic contents, requires verbal expression and insight as much as art expression, both as a diagnostic and as a therapeutic tool (Edwards, 2004; Rubin, 2010; Ulman, 2001).

In the art as therapy approach, which was represented by Hill in England and Edith Kramer in America, the interpretation of the product is not essential; the important thing is for the client to experience the artistic creation process because, according to this approach, the real healing process is the client's creation (Hogan, 2001). According to Hill, the curativeness of art therapy lies in "the fact that it engages the mind as well as the fingers and releases the patient's blocked creative energy" (Hill, 1948, p. 101). Meanwhile, Kramer saw art as a way of integrating conflicting emotions and impulses in an aesthetically satisfying way that helps the ego synthesize through the creative process itself (Rubin, 2010).

Historically, art therapy has been used in psychiatric and daycare facilities as part of general services for people with mental illness. However, as healthcare has evolved, art therapy has been used with increasingly diverse patient populations, including those suffering from substance abuse, trauma and loss, domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, eating disorders, behavioral disorders, and most other forms (Malchiodi, 2005). Initially, art therapy had been strongly influenced by psychodynamic thinking. Later on, the Jungian philosophy went through behavioral, cognitive, and humanistic thinking and found ways to adapt each theory with a set of core beliefs about the usefulness of creative expression in relieving pain and promoting health (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001; Rubin, 2016).

### **Art, Therapy, and Spirituality**

The relationships between art and spirituality and between spirituality and healing have both long and recent histories. The relationship among art, therapy, and spirituality started in the mid-1980s and strengthened in the 1990s; it has become a focus again both in the helping professions and in the world of visual arts, forcing practitioners to confront knowledge of both Western science and spiritual traditions (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001). The idea that a painting or object may have psychological significance to its creator, let alone the aesthetic qualities it may have, is an idea that is taken for granted these days (Edwards, 2004). While Edwards (1989) had mentioned a number of factors that lead one to give meaning to such works and take the healing potential of art seriously, he also mentioned the use of art in religious and spiritual practices. Similarly, artist and art therapist Hill pointed to the spiritual dimension with regard to the regenerative potential of visual arts while giving lectures to the Army Education Corps and underlined that the soldier as well as the artist seek mental shelter and find hope in the creative arts (Hogan, 2001).

In the process of exploring and integrating spiritual dimensions using dreams and artistic imagery, Jung attributed vital importance to spirituality as a precursor to completing healing (Jung, 1961/2021). According to Maslow, spiritual life is an integral feature of human nature and only for self-actualizers; He separated self-actualizers from one another through the experience of transcendence. Those who realize themselves by experiencing transcendence can be distinguished from others in terms of the following characteristics: they have a more holistic view of the world, are more aware of the realm of existence, have a unifying consciousness, have insights that change their view of the world or of themselves, have had peak experiences such as ecstasy, have more respect for peak experiences, have egalitarian attitudes toward people, and are aware of self-identity (i.e., the ego has the ability to go beyond the self; Maslow, 1971/1993, pp. 270–271). Similarly, May (1982) viewed concepts such as meaning, transcendence, and attachment as part of the nature of spirituality, with spirituality allowing individuals to go beyond material experiences and discover meaning in life.

Kelly (1995) defined spirituality as the personal experience of a transcendent connectedness in the universe; according to the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC, 2022), spirituality is an innate disposition unique to all human beings and includes the capacity of a person to be creative, grow, and develop a value system. This spiritual tendency leads the individual toward knowledge, love, understanding, peace, hope, transcendence, connectedness, compassion, well-being, and wholeness. Although spirituality can be experienced and expressed through religion (defined here as an organized system of belief, worship, accumulated traditions, and predetermined rituals), the spiritual issues that arise in counseling may not always be associated with a religious belief system (Burke et al., 2005). Elkins et al. (1988, p. 6) defined spirituality as “a way of being and experiencing that emerges through awareness of a transcendent dimension and is characterized by certain identifiable values regarding self, others, nature, life, and everything that one regards as Ultimate.” Spirituality and religion are not the same thing (Kelly, 1995): The concept of spiritual refers not only to traditionally religious experiences but to all states of awareness and to all human functions and activities that have higher-than-average common denominators (Assagioli, 1989, p. 30). Spirituality is difficult to define due to how it manifests in many different forms around the world (Elkins, 2001); however, the common point in its definitions is that it can be summarized as the longing for a reality beyond the physically limited and the search for deep and permanent meaning in life (ASERVIC, 2022).

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, not only were science and spirituality separated from their partnership, but spirituality and mainstream art was also similarly alienated (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001). Before then, art had been an accepted tool for illuminating spiritual truths, whether visions of shamans or the sacred narratives of

great theologically based cultures; the heavens and hells of other worlds had been colored and shaped through art (Lipsey, 1988). In the newly industrialized West, however, realism became the norm, with the technical virtuosity needed to achieve it being highly valued. Many in disenchanting industrial and technological societies are drawn to something greater than themselves; they seem hungry for something both mysterious and understandable, whose value is permanent beyond temporary success or achievement (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001). As Rollo May (1961, p. 22) said, “Contemporary human suffers from the degradation and collapse of the central symbols of Western culture.”

In a culture that systematically destroys symbols of transcendence, vestigial fragments of ancient mythologies circulate and coexist with the relatively new mythologies of self-awareness and self-actualization. Modern therapists rely on their own mythology (e.g., client-centeredness, intrapsychic models, and developmental theories; Haslam, 1997). The growth of art therapy (McNiff, 1979) emerged in the field of mental health at a time when society had few unifying myths and when the fragmentation of the mind, loss of self-actualization drive, perceptual confusion, and an inability to appreciate the struggle for existence were typical features of emotional disorders, and this growth thus represented a return to the therapeutic (Haslam, 1997).

The rest of this section will discuss the relationship among art, therapy, and spirituality under the following six proposed headings: (i) The use of symbolic expression for healing is rooted in archaic cultures, and this healing process takes place in a spiritual realm. (ii) Art and spirituality reside in the same place in the psyche. (iii) Art therapy offers a unique space for the expression of spirituality. (iv) Art and spirituality have similar functions in the psyche and need each other. (v) Art and spirituality are both important parts of the human experience and healing, and (vi) art and spirituality are transitional phenomena.

### **(i) The Use of Symbolic Expression for Healing Is Rooted in Archaic Cultures, and This Healing Process Takes Place in a Spiritual Realm**

The archaeological record shows that visual images have been used for social, cognitive, and therapeutic purposes (e.g., pain relief, conflict resolution) for so long that their origins are almost indistinguishable from the origins of human consciousness and culture (Haslam, 1997; McNiff, 1979). In most so-called primitive societies, visual arts are prominent in the ritual decoration of the body, costumes, masks, and other accessories; the beautification of sanctuaries; and the creation of a ceremonial setting (McNiff, 1994, 2004). Through art and ritual (e.g., a spiritual phenomenon in nature, a worship-like practice that helps people relate to transcendent realities), the crises of early human groups were identified, shared, and understood. The forms of creative expression (e.g., pictures, dance, sounds, body paints) used in rituals played a

very important role in facilitating the growth and preservation of cognitive systems as well as in facilitating social adaptation (Haslam, 1997). Most healing rituals combine the rhythm of the chant, the beat of the drum, the movement of the dance, and the drama of the story with the power of many visual elements (Rubin, 2010). Countless examples can be found of the use of visual arts in healing rituals throughout time and around the world. Although the beliefs and practices embodied in prehistoric art and in religious and healing rituals can be said to provide the distant cultural basis from which art therapy eventually emerged (McNiff, 1979), radical and important changes have also occurred regarding their nature and functions within these beliefs and practices (Edwards, 2004).

Evidence of the connection between art and spirituality can be found in different cultures around the world throughout the ages. When focusing on the indigenous cultures of the past and present, art is seen to be associated with daily life; one can clearly see how it integrates, from rites of passage to healing ceremonies, utensils, or forms of communication. Beads, feathers, and stone and wooden materials have been used to create symbolic representations equipped with healing and protective powers such as talismans and totems. Some examples that show the mutual relationship between art and spirituality include the everyday objects on which the Bearing Sea Eskimos carved their guardian animals and souls (Ohno, 1985); the Hindu dance Bharata Natyam (Kamuda, 1993), which reminds the audience of the supreme greatness of God; the culture of Native Americans, who saw the arts as inseparable from ritual or religion (Dufrene, 1991) and as one of the explanations of their meaning; the Bushman rock paintings in South Africa (Lewis-Williams, 1983, as cited in Haslam, 1997, p. 7) which is “the belief that visual expression activates the relationship between the healer and the healing power, and that the psychic energy contained in the symbol provides healing through this relationship to the patient;” Egyptian mummies and burial practices; and elegantly crafted places of worship, hymns, and fairy tales (Hogan, 2001, as cited in Feen-Calllgan, 1995, p. 48; Haslam, 1997). This proposition will continue to be discussed in the context of the shaman, a specific figure who identifies the healer-artist-religion trio of primitive societies.

The first manifestation of the concept expressed as therapists are shamans; they are known as medicine men who work with the supernatural, technicians of the sacred, masters of ecstasy, mystics, healers, priests, and artists (McNiff, 1979) and are the ancestors of creative art therapists (McNiff, 1994, 2004). Shamans’ use of spiritual rapture and spiritual discovery as well as creative expression in healing rituals (Haslam, 1997) can be counted among the archaic examples of the inseparable relationship art has with healing and spirituality. While the shaman’s struggle to find meaning and order in the flow of experience is similar to the artistic process, the spiritual importance he attributes to traumatic and tragic conditions supports this exemplary (McNiff, 1979).

In early communities, shamans were the person who helped the group relate to inner experiences and maintained the dialogue. They resemble therapists in this respect, but the process is reversed. Here, the shaman is the main actor who talks to the sick person, detects the imbalance (i.e., the imbalance resulting from “soul loss” where something is taken from the person and missing, or an “alien attack” where something is present that does not belong to the person) that causes sickness by entering a trance, which Eliade emphasized as an intense religious experience rather than a psychopathological state of schizophrenia. The shaman then designs and implements the rituals in which various symbols are used to eliminate this imbalance. Where the shaman plays up conflict and life dramas for the benefit of society, the contemporary psychotherapist has taken the more passive role of reflecting on the client’s behavior. The main player is the client in today’s understanding of therapy; the therapist has the role of listening and encouraging the client to make sense of the symbolic expression they have brought. Clients strengthen themselves through creative expression. Although the process does work in reverse, what is common to both is the transformation of the product that emerges through creative expression in the client (Haslam, 1997; McNiff, 1979). The person’s inner drama depends on the continuities and patterns of the community and through archetypes, which Jung defined as collective primordial images one could call the precipitate of the psychic experiences common in all ages and nations (1976/2016), and the mythological motifs in which archetypes become visible; shamans are in contact with the sacred and use their expressive and associative powers to guide the group (McNiff, 1979). The result is not just emotional purification but a deep insight into the nature of human emotions. Instead of trying to cure outbursts of psychological tension with external calming forces, the artist and shaman go to the heart of the inner storm and express and stage their anger in ways that are valuable to the individual and society (McNiff, 1979, p. 157).

Both the artist and the shaman are practitioners of the sacred. The emergence of art therapy gives one the opportunity to consciously realize and advance these foundations of life (McNiff, 1988, p. 285). According to McNiff (1979), the art therapist is a modern manifestation of the shaman, because the shaman seeks the transcendence of the human soul and responds to the belief systems and values that clarify life by intensifying sensory experience, restoring the balance between the individual and society, and gaining a sense of control over life; put more realistically, shamans have the ability to respond creatively to existential fluctuations and change (McNiff, 1979; 1984). People’s direct connection with their archaic healer roots stems from their reliance on symbols and creative expression as therapists (Haslam, 1997). A shaman’s power source is the unity of mind, body, art, and spirit. The art therapist comes into contact with the continuum of healing at the end of the arts, rituals, and ceremonies, allowing the practice of psychotherapy as well as the direct expression of personal images and sensations. Like shamanism, art therapy occurs when societies become excessively mechanized, disoriented, and detached from their spiritual beginnings; they turn to



unifying art, which offers an alternative to the alienation and imbalance in the aesthetic consciousness in order to heal (McNiff, 1979).

### **(ii) Art and Spirituality Reside in the Same Place in the Psyche**

Spirituality and religion are important themes in art history, themes that artists who'd engaged with deep existential questions addressed. From the perspective of Bell (2011), who defines the artistic experience as an attempt to uncover the archeology of the soul through creative excavation, art opens up a very suitable space to study transcendent non-earthly things and arouse curiosity about what makes life meaningful and purposeful. In the theory of psychosynthesis, Assagioli (1965) assumes a structure of higher consciousness or superconsciousness to exist in all humans. These are the higher intuitions and aspirations of this area of the psyche; in other words, he asserts it to be the source of one's artistic impulses as well as ethical obligations, higher feelings of genius, states of contemplation, enlightenment, and ecstasy (as cited in Horovitz-Derby, 2002, p. 21). Franklin (2001) stated that one gets in touch with one's inner self/spiritual field while making art by actively participating in the creative process. According to him, art takes place on a psychic intermediate/transcendent plane similar to worship. The images and artistic product that emerge in that area contain the messages of inner wisdom and guide the person, serving to align them (Allen, 1995; Franklin, 2001; Jung, 1964/2016).

While creating, the artist takes raw materials and manipulates them in various ways to create new forms. This process is transpersonal because it requires a committed relationship with a source of being beyond the skinned ego. One can say in this context that making art is inherently spiritual and that spirituality is an important component in therapy for the integration of the individual (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001). Gutierrez and Santaaria-Osorio (2018) saw art therapy as a path to spiritual transformation; they emphasized that different expressions of art allow one to define the symbolic and universal meaning that can contribute to the comprehensive (i.e., personal and transcendent) transformation of the soul (2018). Therefore, the three materials of art, psychology, and spirituality should be used together to heal the soul (Horovitz-Derby, 2002).

Artist and art therapist Allen (2005) argued that art helps one bring together the ideals and beliefs that guide life. Allen viewed the Divine as the spiritual way in which one can discover the most by participating in the act of creating images. Art is a way that can take one deeply to the place the soul calls home, whether it be a church, synagogue, mosque, dance studio, soup kitchen or a deep forest; art can guide each seeker to their own personal wisdom teachings. For Allen, artistic creation could be a prayer, ritual, or even remembrance of the Divine. The ultimate goal of art as a spiritual practice is to realize the artist archetype in every human being. The artist

archetype activates the ability to see things from an aesthetic perspective, distinguish harmonies and dissonances, and initiate new combinations or interpretations of life. Every artist develops and deepens their relationship with the Creative Source, the inner guide from which inner wisdom comes, and learns to express and share its gifts.

Moon (2001) is one of the art therapists who consider artistic creation as a prayer. For Moon, prayer is an attempt at spiritual connection and can manifest in many forms. In this respect, she considers making art to be an alternative language of prayer. Prayer is the acceptance of something beyond humanity and of what is already happening and is the offering to a supreme power that transcends humanity. Art as prayer involves drawing, painting, or sculpting the everyday, mundane images of life as they present themselves. When the practice comes to an end, one becomes aware of and accepts life as it is and one's capacity to contribute to the disintegration or healing of the self and the world as human beings while talking about the resulting artistic output.

Moon (2001) also raised the question of how traditional elements of a Christian belief system can inform a therapist's practice in a way that affirms the creative process while being responsive to the client's needs without imposing any particular dogma or belief. What the therapist brings to the art therapy session is not religious dogma about the nature of prayer but the religious and spiritual idea to which the idea of making art as a form of prayer touches. As prayer, it enables or strengthens people to change and transform in art; an attempt to make art intentionally but uncontrollably is active quitting.

Julia Cameron stated that everyone is an artist (2012), just as sculptor and artist Joseph Beuys who said that every human being is an artist, based on the fact that people are the creators of their own life journey, which is potentially their best work (as cited in Colette, 2019, p. 5). In Cameron's (Cameron, 2012, pp. 7–21) book titled *The Artist's Way*, she presents an 8-step spiritual roadmap through which one can clear out creative blockages and make the artist within visible, stating, "Just as blood is a part of your physical body and not something you invented, creativity is a reality of your spiritual body and you don't have to invent it." According to Cameron, creativity is an act of belief and art is a spiritual path; people are healed by their lively (healthy) creativity and again reach the transcendent parts of their selves by using their creativity.

### **(iii) Art Therapy Offers a Unique Space for the Expression of Spirituality**

Art is a universal language that cannot be replaced by any oral language humans use (Sutherland, 1995). Every person can discover unique experiences through works of art and search for their meanings and special value. Artwork becomes a symbolic mirror through which one can look, interpret, and possibly transform oneself (Klein et al., 2008). The pain and suffering people inevitably have to endure is made bearable to some extent through symbols and the transcendent meanings they provide (Jung,

1952/2020; May, 1961). At the same time, participation in creation is an act of faithful devotion to an ultimate reality. Just as in making art, whatever term is used to express this ultimate reality, only one's senses are unable to observe and know the object of one's belief. People grasp at God, the Mystery, the Higher Power, and/or the Ultimate Good through their imagination. Anything that cannot be seen, heard, felt, touched, smelled, tasted, or logically understood can still be imagined; thus imagination can be said to be a tool of belief. In art therapy, this belief is embodied in the act of making art, and this art becomes something that can be seen, heard, felt, touched, smelled, and perhaps even tasted (Moon, 2001). The relationship and sense of unity to be established with the symbol that has been externalized and made visible is the channel through which transformative power flows to the client (Haslam, 1997). In this process, the important thing is not the artistic product itself or whether it is beautiful or ugly or right or wrong (Malchiodi, 2003); the important thing is the inner content of the transcendental/spiritual field with which the person connects while creating as well as the inner messages that manifest by taking on artistic images (Franklin, 2001).

Expressing the sacred or transcendent in words is difficult (Moon, 2001). Art provides richness of expression in nonverbal ways (Rubin, 2010; Vick, 2012). When evaluated in this context, art is a spiritual act (Franklin, 2001) and a relational encounter and expression with the shaping of the soul. It has the potential to aesthetically and ethically reveal the objects, events, processes, or encounters that affect the maker and receiver (Ettinger, 2005). As a raptured experience with the soul, whether visual, literary, performative, or musical, one can see and use sensory spiritual qualities in any of the myriad forms of art (Bickel, 2020). Art is a tool that allows one to transcend linear time, move backwards and forwards into personal and transpersonal history, as well as unrealized and possible opportunities (Allen, 2005). The possibilities to be explored in art therapy through the language of the visual arts, their structures, and contexts that are alternative or complementary to words are vast. The nature of creative experience using gestures, colors, shapes, and textures fits universally to all religious and existential beliefs (Wood, 1998). The justifications discussed above suggest that art therapy is well-suited to addressing spirituality in the therapy process.

#### **(iv) Art and Spirituality Have Similar Functions in the Psyche and Need Each Other**

Damasio (2010, as cited in Colette, 2019, p. 6) said that the arts survive thanks to their therapeutic value, which is a compensation against human disasters and suffering. Similarly, many studies are available that suggest spirituality to be associated with positive coping and healthy development (Biancalani et al, 2022; Can & Duran, 2021; Craig et al, 2022; Corrigan et al, 2003; Richardson et al., 2022; Muehlhausen, 2021). In one example where art collaborates with spirituality in healing the human soul, Kearney and Weininger (2012) recommended art therapy as an excellent approach to

bring awareness to the soul in the relationship between fear of death and suffering. Maty (2017) reported that art therapy applied to 14 participants in a spiritual care center had been effective at improving variables such as meaning-making, hope, and well-being and suggested art therapy as a form of spiritual care. Meanwhile, Breitbart et al. (2010) included creativity and art as well as various elements such as nature, humor or memories among the experiential meaning sources that are likely to relieve existential or spiritual suffering in the meaning-centered group psychotherapy they'd developed. In one doctoral dissertation, Bell (2008) used an ethnographic approach to investigate the art therapy he'd conducted with nine patients who were at the end of their life in a palliative care environment. Bell's analyses showed art therapy to reveal meaning and spirituality in people engaged in art therapy at the end of life, stressing the unique place and importance of art therapy for exploring and expressing spirituality. Art therapy offers the opportunity to create meaning and explore spirituality along with other psychic needs (Bell, 2019). Bell supports this view with his experience that, although his patients had come from a wide variety of socioeconomic conditions as well as cultural and religious contexts, the art therapy he'd conducted with patients for 16 years in a local nursing home had described and reflected their spiritual needs and contributed to them gaining a deeper receptivity and spiritual sensitivity (Bell, 2011, 2019). Campbell (1986, as cited in Feen-Calligan, 1995, p. 48) stated that the creative discoveries the artist makes represent universal truths. According to Campbell, the correct artist functions as a real seer and prophet through their inspiration.

Color is the key. The eye is the hammer. The soul is a piano with many strings, and the artist is the hand that plays the keys to make the human soul vibrate properly (Kandinsky, 1952/2020). Colette (2019, p. 4) explained the contribution of the artistic process to spiritual development and well-being as follows:

During art therapy, clients are the protagonists of their own artistic actions, regardless of their technical skills. They make creative decisions guided by their inner guide telling them to choose a particular shape or color. This is a pursuit of beauty.

According to Kandinsky, beauty is that which arises from the inner psychic need and enriches the soul in an intangible way (Kandinsky, 1952/2020). Every color in a painting is beautiful because it causes a mental vibration, and every vibration enriches the soul. From this point of view, everything that appears ugly on the outside can be considered beautiful inside, both in art and in life. Art-based inquiries explore how individuals and communities construct meaning by representing and reflecting on experiences that challenge previous understandings of the world and one's place in the world. Art-based research is therefore a natural ally of spiritual growth and care (Colette, 2019).

One of Horovitz-Derby's (2002) clients who'd encountered spiritual art therapy when she had been unable to make progress after having been in therapy in other schools for many years mentioned how the psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, and eclectic approaches had had no effect on her existential anxieties, emphasizing the shortcomings of two factors. The first factor is that the language of classical psychology remains barren with regard to expressing itself. Her art is something that is only admired in therapy, but what is not on the agenda of therapy is that which has been deeply ignored and excluded. The second factor again involves the language of classical psychology and is the absence of the spiritual aspect that her soul longs for. She talks about the need to not only talk about both subjects on a cognitive level, but to have them resonate with the experience in her soul:

I see painful memories forming in these creations. It's not easy to hold a clay product or look at pictures because they are tangible representations of the issue or parts of it that hurt. Talking about them is an even greater challenge. However, when we talk about these things, I feel my feelings and that inner change begins to happen. (Horovitz-Derby, 2002, p. 13)

### **(v) Art and Spirituality Are Both Important Parts of the Human Experience and Healing**

In the current age, people are like midwives in the collective transformation of consciousness, and art making can be one of the best ways to gain a new understanding in this process (Allen, 2005). Ancient peoples had religions and rituals to deal with mental disorders. In the dilemma one fall into as modern people; one will have to look at these distant healing philosophies that did not have a cartesian revolution, thus did not consider separating mind from body, body from spirit, or separating mind and body from social context (Douglas, 2001). For example, mandalas are found in the art of many religious traditions, where they are used in the service of personal growth and spiritual transformation. Tibetan Buddhism has used mandalas as a meditation aid for thousands of years, and Navajo sand painters use them in healing rituals. Jung saw the mandala as an expression of the self and an archetypal symbol of integrity (Samuels et al., 1986); he believed that creating mandalas helps patients make the subconscious mind conscious with regard to mandalas' use as a therapeutic tool (Edwards, 2004). Jung's emphasis on images and imagination in terms of psychological healing has had a significant impact on the development of art therapy. According to Maclagan, what makes Jung a point of reference for the later development of art therapy was not just his insistence on the primacy of the image and the phantasmagorical thought that is attached to it, nor was it the great importance he attached to archetypal symbolism; it was also the pioneering promotion of making art as an important path to psychological awareness (2001). Jung and his followers have challenged the view that creativity is synonymous with neurosis, thus freeing art from psychoanalysis' reductionist scrutiny (Edwards, 2004). Art serves individuation through symbols, and individuation is a spiritual process governed by the Self (Jung, 1964/2016).

### **(vi) Art and Spirituality Are Transitional Phenomena**

Art is a way of knowing for anyone who wants to connect with emotion, intuition, and inner being, who wants to create a path to the river of spirit that flows under life every day, and who wants to become more alive in the process. Art as a way of knowing is not about the product but the process of creation (Allen, 2005; Malchiodi, 2005). This view is similar to what Winnicott (2007) defined as the transition area and the transition phenomenon. The transitional space between the real and the unreal does not belong to either side. It is the domain of dreams, fantasies, games, rituals, symbols, art, and creativity. Representations of God, spiritual experiences, and religious practices also show themselves in this area (Saur & Saur, 1993).

Art becomes a relational encounter and expression by shaping the soul. It has the potential to “create objects, events, processes or encounters” that aesthetically and ethically affect the maker and receiver (Ettinger, 2005). According to Allen (2005), the first step in making art is playing games. Creation can be simple or complex, alone or in combination; it can involve simple materials or complex multi-step processes. Each person finds their own path to the right artistic experience by following the energy, flow, and pleasure that comes from opening up to the guidance of the Creative Source, and this includes the spiritual experience. This safe space that enables abstract but vital experiences such as creativity and spirituality makes a great contribution to the individual’s adventure of initiation into the outside world.

### **Conclusion**

The article has investigated within its scope the ancient and close relationship among the concepts of art, therapy, and spirituality. This relationship is grouped under six headings: (i) The use of symbolic expression for healing is rooted in archaic cultures, and this healing process takes place in a spiritual realm. (ii) Art and spirituality reside in the same place within the psyche. (iii) Art therapy offers a unique space for the expression of spirituality. (iv) Art and spirituality have similar functions in the psyche and need each other. (v) Art and spirituality are both important parts of the human experience and healing. And (vi) Art and spirituality are transitional phenomena. Although these propositions for explaining the relationship art has with therapy and spirituality have benefited from the use of spirituality in therapy and the theoretical basis of art therapy, the article has aimed not to describe a theoretical structure such as spiritually oriented art therapy but to provide a theoretical review. Issues such as the role of the therapist in spiritually oriented art therapy, therapeutic processes, and techniques can be elaborated upon in a separate study focused on therapy and practice. The examples of the use of art and spirituality in healing with regard to primitive cultures as discussed in this article have been limited to the rituals and practices of different tribes and different geographies that can be considered mostly shamanic; other spiritual traditions and

practices have been omitted from the scope of the discussion. In this context, future research can investigate the relationship between art therapy and spirituality in terms of different spiritual traditions and especially in terms of large institutional religious structures such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

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Book Review

# Towards an Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy

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Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and  
Psychotherapy: Islamic Theology and Contemporary  
Understandings of Psychology

By Abdallah Rothman, Foreword by Abdal Hakim Murad  
New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 224 pp., \$160.00.

Due to the destructive legacy of colonialism within the Islamic world, traditional or premodern wisdom has, in large part, been brushed aside in favor of a materialistic and reductionistic outlook based on the shifting sands of modern intellectual fashions. Modern Western psychology emerged through the secularizing trajectory of the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment project; all of which contributed to the purging of metaphysics and the human soul's intrinsic connection to the spiritual dimension within the discipline. Due to the growing interest in restoring this vital dimension, Islamic psychology—akin to other traditional understandings of the mind known as *perennial psychology*—addresses this need to understand human behavior in light of the sacred.

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Islamic psychology, founded on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet, offers a tripartite understanding of human beings in terms of Spirit (*Rūḥ*), soul (*nafs*), and body (*jism*). Central to this approach to the “science of the soul” (*ilm al nafs*) is a focus on our primordial nature (*fiṭrah*) as reflected in the Divine Law (*sharī'ah*). Within Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), known as the inner or mystical dimension of Islam, there is adherence not only to the Divine Law, but also to ‘the way’ or spiritual path (*tarīqah*), with a view to conforming to

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Reality or Truth (*ḥaqīqah*). The spiritual path is compared to a human being situated on the circumference of a circle (representing the *sharī‘ah*), where each point is connected to a radius (representing the *ṭarīqah*) that leads to the center (representing the *ḥaqīqah*). The Spirit (*ar-Rūḥ*), while transcendent, is also immanent within the soul (*naḥs*) of the human being (*al-insān*), and it is when the faculty of the Intellect (*al-‘aql*) is restored in the heart (*al-qalb*) that our primordial nature (*fiṭrah*) can be fully realized at the highest level. The term ‘*aql*’ in Arabic is used to denote both reason and intellect, yet the relationship between them (the first being horizontal and the second vertical), is always recognized.

Abdallah Rothman is Professor of Islamic Psychology, Principal at Cambridge Muslim College, and Executive Director of the International Association of Islamic Psychology. This book consists of seven chapters. *Chapter 1: Beyond Islamization: Re-envisioning Western Psychotherapy within an Indigenous Psychological Paradigm* presents a framework for understanding Islamic psychology or the “science of the soul” from within the Islamic tradition (Qur’ān, Sunnah and exegesis (*tafsīr*)) and its application to mental health treatment in a manner that is not reliant on the assumptions of modern Western psychology. *Chapter 2: Islam and Psychology: The Development of a New Field* offers an outline of religion and psychology so as to better delineate the book’s thesis. *Chapter 3: Grounded Theory and Theology: A Methodological Approach to Constructing a Religiously Inspired Theoretical Framework* gives an overview of the qualitative research in this field and presents: (i) the author’s own methodology; (ii) how and why it was selected; and (iii) the criteria for evaluating relevant research findings. *Chapter 4: An Islamic Model of the Soul: Theoretical Foundations for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy* provides the findings for the initial phase of this study as informed by the Islamic tradition. *Chapter 5: The Nature and Structure of the Soul: Therapeutic Conceptualizations in Islamic Psychotherapy* conveys the first half of the findings from the second phase of the research. *Chapter 6: Stages and Development of the Soul: The Clinical Scope of Islamic Psychotherapy* shares the findings from the second half of the second phase of the study. *Chapter 7: Reflections Upon a Framework for an Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Agenda for Research and Practice* presents the findings from both phases of the study in its entirety.

Abdal Hakim Murad (Timothy Winter, b. 1960) has written an important foreword for the book that discusses the theme of mental health within the Islamic tradition. He draws on the connection between human identity, the mind and the Divine: “Humanity is traditionally said to ‘image’ God, so that the enigma of mind seems to reflect the enigma of God Himself” (p. xiii). It is through self-knowledge of pure intelligence or the transcendent intellect (‘*aql*’) that the immanence of the Divine can be discerned, as indicated by God having “breathed into him of My Spirit” (Qur’ān 15:29).

Abdal Hakim Murad addresses the central concern of mental health within the three Abrahamic monotheisms as follows:

What is today called mental health has thus been for the monotheisms a matter of absolutely central religious concern, since we are ‘created to worship God’ ([Qur’ān] 51:56) and thus to know Him, and disorders in our inward equilibrium do not only generate sinful behaviour but obstruct our capacity to approach God, to be inspired by His qualities, and ultimately, for the mystical traditions, to perceive Him: the very purpose of our creation. (p. xiii)

He makes a vital point on the shortcomings of both contemporary psychology and psychiatry:

Biomedical science has made enormous strides in understanding the body and its disorders, but our comprehension of the mind and its needs has lagged far behind, and many modern pharmaceutical or behavioural remedies seem based more on empirical evidence of effectiveness than on any comprehensive understanding of the mind and the brain. (p. xiii)

Islamic cosmology and psychology offer a markedly different vision of the human being compared to what we find in modern Western psychology, in that its concern is with the nature of what it means to be human and with the very its purpose of existence itself. Although modern science and its psychology asserts to be neutral and value-free, it is often unaware of its own biases and presuppositions, which perpetuate its monopoly as a discipline and invalidate all other forms of psychology that are grounded on sacred epistemologies. Its hegemonic assumptions all too often go unchecked. Rothman explains how this hinders the theory and application of therapy: “Cultural adaptations of popular Western concepts of psychotherapy can only go so far in their effective application with Muslim service users with higher levels of religiosity” (p. 4).

Many individuals participating in therapeutic services who belong to a faith tradition may inadvertently fall prey to adhering to guidance that is antithetical to their own religion’s perspective and practices, which may be unknown to the mental health practitioner. This leads to an ethical dilemma for the discipline of modern Western psychology, which may lead to deleterious spiritual consequences for individuals with spiritual beliefs. A practitioner of Islamic psychology follows the lead of the individual participating in treatment to determine whether or not they wish to receive therapy that aligns with the Islamic tradition. This is emphasized in the Qur’ān: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:256). Again, there is no obligation, as each human being needs to turn freely to the Divine of their own will.

The practice of one’s religion, whatever this revealed faith may be, is itself a complete and integral psychology or “science of the soul.” Rothman frames this

within the Islamic tradition: “It could be argued that Islam in itself is, or includes, a pathway to understanding the nature of the psyche and it could thus be considered that the study and practice of Islam are inherently an Islamic psychology” (p. 9). He adds, “Islam is understanding the teachings from the Qur’an and Sunnah which explain the nature of the soul or psyche and that the practices decreed in Islam are therapeutic methods for correcting maladaptive behavior, solving interpersonal problems, and achieving self-growth—all primary aims of psychology” (p. 9).

It is time for mental health practitioners to go beyond cultural sensitivity to also include the diverse knowledge systems of these cultures as informed by their religious and spiritual traditions. According to Rothman, “Perhaps more important than simply being sensitive to a service user’s relative orientation to their Muslim religion, is the notion of adjusting therapeutic interventions to concur with and align with their level of religiosity” (p. 24).

Muslims who are themselves mental health practitioners may be unaware of how their own education and training within modern Western psychology colors their outlook, which may be in direct conflict with the tenets of their religion. They may wish to adapt their understanding of the Islamic tradition in their clinical work; however, if they are unaware of the fundamental divergences between mainstream psychology and their religion, it could have potentially harmful outcomes. The secular training required for becoming a therapist can cause much doubt about the relevance of religion and its ability to integrate and heal the human psyche, if not lead some to compartmentalize or disavow their faith traditions altogether. With that noted, the opposite error could also be made; namely, where a therapist overlooks or minimizes what is indeed a mental health difficulty by dismissing it as a problem that requires a spiritual solution. A balanced and moderate approach needs to be taken by the mental health practitioner so as not to avoid these extremes which is difficult to do given the confusion that surrounds these delicate matters today. The author cites Malik Badri (1932–2021), known throughout the world as the “father of Islamic psychology,” regarding the reluctance of Muslim mental health practitioners to re-envision psychology according to Islamic principles:

Unthinking repetition of Western theories and practices in the discipline of psychology probably presents one of the most serious threats to the status of Islamic ideology among our Muslim scholars and laity. Western psychologists propound theories about man’s personality, motivation and behavior which are in many ways contradictory to Islam. These theories and their applications are carefully sugar-coated with the attractive cover of “science”. Muslim psychologists, like their colleagues in other parts of the world, have an anxious zeal to be introduced under the prestigious umbrella of the sciences. (p. 27)

Due to the colonizing force of modern Western psychology, numerous Muslim mental health practitioners have forgone their own religious orientations to adhere to the hegemony of modern science and its psychology.

It is often taken for granted or overlooked that notions about what is normal or abnormal depend on our understanding of human beings. They do not exist in a vacuum but are attached to a specific worldview and its way of seeing reality. Since its inception, modern Western psychology has never been, nor can it be, neutral. To assess and diagnose the psychopathology of individuals or our era requires standards of mental health, yet these are again integral to the essence of what it means to be human within a given culture and its religious or spiritual tradition. These too presuppose values and assumptions. According to Rothman, “The understanding of human nature and the relative conception of structural aspects that make up the human psyche or ‘soul’ determine much of how we make sense of behaviour and motivation and are fundamental to the philosophical underpinnings of theoretical approaches to psychology and psychotherapy” (p. 72). The sacred psychologies of the religious and spiritual traditions are all rooted in metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology, all of which inform our appreciation of the human condition.

In an increasingly pluralistic era, diverse forms of psychology need to be made available to accommodate the increasingly diverse needs of individuals. Modern Western psychology falls short here because of its entrenched epistemological biases which are severed from the sacred. Rothman notes, “In a time when societies are made up of greatly diverse groups of people who hold vastly different paradigmatic perspectives, it may be prudent to embrace multiple views of human psychology relevant to a given paradigm of the human predicament” (p. 31). Mainstream psychology has, thus far, been unable or unwilling to embrace the epistemological pluralism found across humanity’s cultures due to the absence of metaphysics in its worldview.

Mental health, as understood by the world’s religions, have a much deeper significance that is intimately linked to existential and metaphysical problems. Mental illness within Islamic psychology differs significantly from secular approaches to understanding the human psyche, as Rothman explains: “Imbalance or psychological ‘problems’ were not primarily seen as problems in and of themselves but were seen as symptoms, signals or signs of the real problem being a disconnection from God or disconnection from the awareness and remembrance of God” (p. 156). That a person’s disconnection from the Divine could compromise their psycho-physical health is still something that is not widely recognized outside of spiritually based therapies. Disharmony in a human soul (*nafs*) is often directly related to whether one is living in right relationship with the Divine Law. This also applies beyond the

individual to include the human collectivity and the society of which someone is a member. In other words, the culture itself can become ill on a large scale, thereby compromising the psychological health of the individual.

For this reason, an application of the “science of the soul,” in whatever form it takes, requires more from the mental health practitioner than does secular psychotherapy. Rothman writes, “Islamic psychotherapy requires more of a personal commitment from the therapist” (p. 159). To the extent that we do not know how to correctly think in accordance with a given spiritual tradition, our perspective will inevitably be skewed, no matter how knowledgeable we may be about secular therapeutic approaches. Furthermore, we can only provide treatment to others to the degree that we ourselves have faced our own trials, both as they apply to everyday life and to the spiritual path. Again, the role of the therapist in this context radically differs from what is expected in mainstream psychology; as Rothman observes: “The potential for a person to ‘polish their mirror’ by doing *jihād an nafs* [the war against the soul] and thus reflecting the light of the *rūh* in their soul, as well as the potential for a person to reflect back to a companion their own state of their soul” (p. 161). He explains, “an Islamic perspective of psychology is inextricably linked to the process of cleansing the soul” (p. 95). The goal in all traditional psychology is to increase a human being’s proximity to the Divine and thus effect a greater integration therein. Rothman asserts that the aim of therapy within Islamic psychology is to “assist the client in moving through the stages of the soul in a non-linear fashion with a focus on progression upward in the model towards the higher stages of the soul” (p. 168). He adds, “The primary objective of treatment in this model is for the client to reach equilibrium in their soul” (p. 170).

The purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is of utmost importance, as we are reminded: “Surely the soul commands to evil, save whom my Lord may show mercy” (Qur’ān 12:53). Within the mystical dimension of Islam or Sufism, there are four degrees of the human psyche: ascending from the animal soul (*an-nafs al-haywāniyah*), the passionate soul (*an-nafs al-ammārah* or “soul that incites” to evil), the discerning or intelligent soul (*an-nafs al-lawwāmah* or “soul that blames”), and the intellectual soul (*an-nafs al-muṭma’innah* or “the soul at peace,” the human psyche reintegrated in Spirit or *Rūh*).

According to the principles of Islamic psychology, “God alters not what is in a people until they alter what is in themselves” (Qur’ān 13:11). This is closely associated with the process of repentance (*tawbah*), to turn around the human soul inwardly and return to the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) as sanctioned by God. Through the “science of the soul,” as informed by the Islamic tradition, are transcendent principles



provided for both mental health practitioner and individual so as to instill trust in God (*tawakkul*), through remembrance (*dhikr*), mindfulness (*taqwā*) and meditation (*tafakkur*). In this way, individuals can adequately face the ordeals of the human condition, for they represent the many deaths of the false self or empirical ego in this temporal world (*dunyā*) in order that we may return to the Divine Unity (*Tawhīd*) or Spirit (*Rūh*).

Abdallah Rothman has accomplished the commendable task of providing a much-needed framework for the understanding of the theory and practice of Islamic psychology; and to do so in a way that is not vitiated by the truncated distortions of modern Western psychology. The time has come to put an end to modern Western psychology's monopoly, which claims to have the only valid method. In fact, it presents as an anomaly, in that it is the only psychology that has divorced itself from metaphysics and the spiritual dimension, thus forfeiting the status of a "science of the soul" that it once had, prior to the emergence of modernity and its establishment as a separate discipline divorced from philosophy and religion.

Islamic psychology is not about introducing religious and spiritual notions into the pre-existing structure of mainstream psychology, but rather a turn within the depths of the Islamic tradition itself, applying its own metaphysical, ontological, and epistemic principles in understanding the human being and its relationship to the sacred, utilizing its own unique treatment modalities. It is through the perennial psychology, in its distinctive Islamic form, that a renewal of the "science of the soul" is being rehabilitated as a discipline distinct from modern Western psychology (Ajmal, 1987; Badri, 1979; Bakhtiar, 2019; Lombard, 1999; Nasr, 2007).

To bring the discipline of psychology into dialogue with the Islamic tradition requires erudition and sensitivity on the part of mental health professionals. It is paramount that practitioners who seek to accommodate the spiritual dimension into their treatment options, such as is found within Islamic psychology, should always recall religious people's connection to those means that are indispensable to "healing for the (diseases) in your hearts" (Qur'ān 10:57).

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