

The Effects of Implementation of Religion and Spiritual Elements in the Counselling Process

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Abstract

The implementation of religion and spiritual elements in the counselling process has received attention from researchers and individuals from this area. This systematic review explores the effectiveness of this implementation on clients who had undergone counselling sessions. This systematic review is conducted following Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines. A few electronic databases have been used such as Ebscohost, ProQuest and Sage Journals. Moreover, the Google Scholar website is also utilized in this review. The term used in the searching process is "Effect", "Spiritual" "Counselling" and other relevant provenance focusing on advantages of the inclusion of religion and spiritual elements in counselling process. There are different countries involved in this systematic review and 15 journal articles extracted have been reviewed. Results showed that utilizing the religion and spiritual elements in counselling process had led to the beneficial effects to the clients.

Keywords: Counselling, Religion, Spiritual, Effects, Systematic Review

Introduction

One of the fields that have long been dominated by figures who isolate religion as a premise on many variables in their theory is the field of counselling. Among them are the clashes between scientists and religion, the proliferation of scientific theories, the weakness of religious institutions, the emergence of ideas from Sigmund Freud, Watson, Thorndike and Skinner, the contribution of thought at the time, such as naturalism, determinism, universalism and reductionism, and even the conceptions of State and Church separation (Sapora, 2016).

However, religion and spirituality in the field of counselling play a powerful role, even though it has long been discussed among Western scholars where, at an early stage, most of them have resisted this aspect in the field of counselling. According to Bergin (1980) in Sapora (2016), however, it is claimed that the segregation between psychology and religion during

the 20th century is over. Hundreds of papers have been published in professional journals on religion, mental and spiritual wellbeing and psychotherapy, and many presentations have been given at professional conferences.

Thus, the influence of religion and spirituality (R&S) in the lives of clients in health and mental health has captured the interest of helping practitioners including counsellors over the past few decades. Research shows that not only does the integration of religion and spirituality have the ability to improve health and mental health performance, but clients prefer such a combination into treatment (Oxhandler and Giardina, 2018). Clients describe spirituality as a prominent feature in their lives, despite disagreement in the counselling literature about effective ways to integrate spirituality into counselling. This indicates that clients want counsellors to understand their spirituality and religious beliefs and integrate these spiritual tenets into counselling practices since this profession fostered multicultural counselling, ignoring religion and spiritual concerns in counselling may result in cultural insensitivity to clients' spiritual and religious concerns. It is because eliminating any factor that contributes to human diversity diminishes the spirit of multiculturalism.

Besides, according to Aghajani et al.(2013) and Memaryan et al. (2016), counselling that involves spirituality is a form of intervention in which the counsellor takes action to help the clients, based on their spiritual values and strengths. It is because spirituality has been shown to affect how clients address their problems to their counsellors, which will affect their treatment course (Sue & Sue, 2013; Sridhar & Kit, 2016). It is obvious that religious and spiritual needs are recognized in the process of helping. As a result, it's not surprising that it's expanding. According to Sapora (2009), religious and spiritual dimensions of counselling grow more essential as professional organizations such as the American Counselling Association (ACA) and the American Psychological Association recognize and embrace religion as a respected part. The element of religion, according to APA (2011), is one of the components that aids the functioning of human life. Besides, the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counselling (ASERVIC, 2009) also developed competencies to assist counsellors to integrate spirituality into their work and acknowledge spirituality as a significant factor in their clients' lives.

Religion and Spirituality (R&S)

The understanding of religion and spirituality is interchangeable for most people to the point that it can easily be confused. According to Land (2015), religion is a systematic belief that involves a shared systemized belief of moral values and traditions that shape the relationship of humanity. It can be said as a personal set of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices. Besides, the term religiosity has an interrelated with religion that can be defined as one's adherence to a structure or practice of denominational belief and can be specified by the obedience of an individual to an explicit set of religious rules or criteria (Koenig et al., 2012; Sagaser et al., 2016).

Spirituality is a dynamic and ambiguous term and its meaning depends on the worldview of the individual. According to Oxhandler & Giardina (2018) spiritual is a personal journey to understand the answers to the key questions of life, purpose and connection with the divine or transcendent that may or may not contribute to or emerge from the growth of religious practices and the development of society. It may refer to the relationship of a person with something more powerful or supreme in the belief system and refers to the transcendent position in one's life as well as to the connection with the present, self, family, environment

and also something important and sacred (Sajadi et al., 2017). Thus, religion and spiritual have different connotations and understandings.

But according to Chida (2015), religiosity and spirituality can be defined broadly as any feelings, thoughts, understandings and behaviours that occur from a search for the “sacred”, with the former implying group or social practices and doctrines and the latter tending to refer to personal experiences and beliefs

Methodology

Search Strategy

This systematic review is carried out in accordance with the criteria of Preferred Reporting Products for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA). Some electronic databases such as the Ebcobost, ProQuest, and Sage Journals have been used. In addition, the Google Scholar website is also used for this study. The term used in the searching process is “Effect”, “Spiritual”, “Counselling” and another relevant provenance. The flow diagram is shown in Figure 1.

Inclusion Criteria

All reviews from different journals have been published from 2015 to 2020 for of five years. In addition, only articles in English shall be used. The field related to counselling, psychology, social science and the arts and humanities, is included. Furthermore, the articles in this systemic review come from different countries such as Indonesia, Iran, Singapore, United States and others.

Exclusion Criteria

The chapter on books, reviews and books is omitted. Subject areas which are not applicable to this field are removed, including accounting, finance, sports, business and administration. The flow of the systematic review Figure 1 began with an initial search using the terms effects, spiritual, counselling, effectiveness and other related provenance. The quest was accompanied by the year of publication, the population, the type of article and the related subject area.

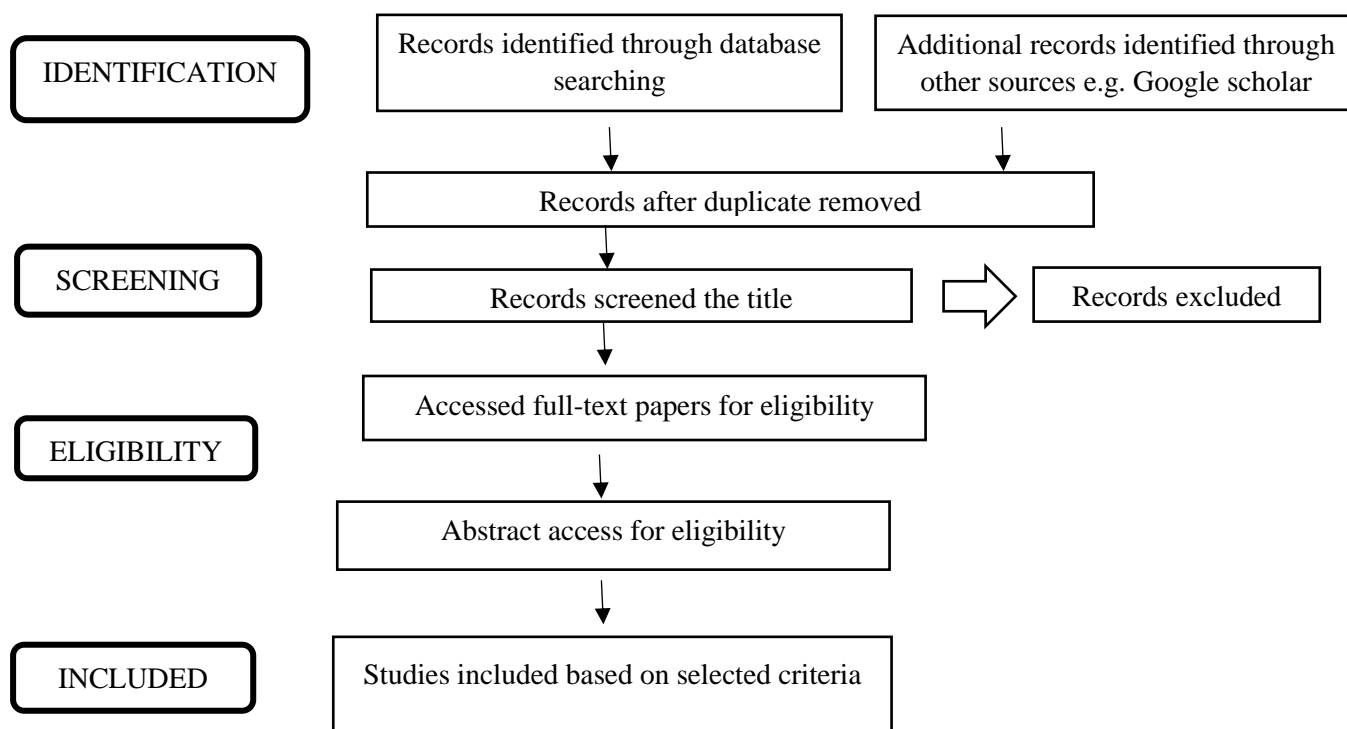


Figure 1 Flow diagram for the selected review of studies on the effects of the implementation of religion and spiritual elements in counselling process

Findings and Discussion

Findings were tabulated based on seven aspects such as life hope, life satisfaction, mental health issue, coping processes, self-efficacy and self-control, holistic wellness and addiction recovery.

Life Hope

According to Aghajani et al. (2013), after spiritual counselling, the mean hope of patients was 33.36 ± 5.9 , which is substantially higher than the mean hope (28.48 ± 3.2) before the treatment ($p < 0.0001$). However no substantial difference between the hope before and after the analysis was found in the control group.

Their empirical results showed, according to Mansur & Abbas (2017), that spirituality moderated the relationship with suicidal behaviour between hopelessness and depression. In predicting suicidal behaviour, faith has provided a major protective impact against hopelessness and depression.

The mean and standard deviation of the mental health score of cancer patients in the experimental and control groups was 16.40 (2.21) and 16.566 (1.56) in the experimental and control groups, according to Eilami (2018), before the introduction of the intervention. But the score was equivalent to 11.24 (2.93) and 16.82 (1.83) after the intervention was applied, demonstrating a substantial statistical improvement. Thus, the introduction of supportive spiritual intervention in patients with cancer has led to an improvement in life expectancy and hope.

Life Satisfaction

According to Abdi et al.(2019), There was no significant difference between the mean of life satisfaction in the experiment group [5.47(3.37)] and control [5.85(3.92)] prior to the intervention, but the mean of life satisfaction in the test group [8.08(4.36)] was higher than the control group [5.55(3.96)] (P=0.006) after the intervention. The favourable impacts of a psychological intervention employing a spiritual approach to increase aliveness can also be seen in another study that relates the religion to a component of subjective well-being, demonstrating that more religious people or who instil or applying their faith are more content with life than non-religious people (Gull & Dawood, 2013; Qurotul et al., 2019).

Mental Health Issue

Spirituality has also been proven to reduce the association between depression and anxiety symptoms, as well as perceived stress or bad life events and it can facilitate psychological well-being in the face of adversity. According to Chida (2015), before the intervention and after 3 months of follow-up, depressive symptoms were measured. The treatment group reported a substantial decrease in depressive symptoms relative to the control group, both at post-intervention and 3-month follow-up.

Besides that, according to Haghigat et al. (2018), the mean (\pm SD) of the stress score in the counselling group changed from 35.4 (\pm 4.5) before the intervention that instils spiritual elements to 34.8 (\pm 3.5) four weeks after the intervention while the score increased from 34.8 (\pm 6.3) to 37.8 (\pm 3.7) in the control group. The mean score perceived stress was significantly lower in the counselling group (adjusted mean difference = -3.4; 95% confidence interval = -2.3 to -4.4; P<0.001) based on ANCOVA after the intervention.

In addition, the implementation of spiritual and religion concerns also gave a positive impact on clients or patients with a severe mental disorder by according to Rahmat et al. (2013) and Ghotbabadi et al.(2018), reported that spiritual-religious treatment had optimal benefits on severe psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia and improved the situations of such patients/clients.

Furthermore, according to Harris et al.(2015) and Junfei Lu et al.(2018), over 70% of 91 persons who were satisfied with mental health counselling preferred that counsellors inquire about spirituality.

Coping Process

Many people cling to their sense of spirituality in times of hardship and engage in spiritual coping through spiritual beliefs and activities to help them cope with psychological and emotional difficulties. According Sagaser et al. (2016), the data revealed that the usage of the words God, believe/belief, Christian, church, faith, hands of God, will of God, prayer and religion were reflective of an increased willingness to address faith as part of the coping process in the session. In addition, if the patients or clients had any hints, the counsellor would be much easier to determine when to include this strategy and should be aware for individuals who believe spirituality to be an important component of their lives are more likely to adopt spiritual coping mechanisms to solve their problems or any difficulties.

Self-efficacy and Self-control

According to Mazandarani (2018), due to the significant difference demonstrated by statistical analysis after spiritual counselling and three months later, it was able to provide self-efficacy and self-control in haemodialysis patients.

Holistic Wellness

In terms of clients' cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and ontological components, many dimensions of spirituality and religion can play a vital role in the stability of people's emotional well-being. Counselling, according to Corey (2009); Miles Matise et al. (2018), must treat the body, mind, and spirit for it to be effective. Spirituality gives life meaning and purpose, and it grows in wisdom and love as we mature. We begin to feel wonder, a sense of connectedness to all of existence, and deep reverence for something greater than our ego-centred self. This sense of connection encompasses both a sense of connection to the Creator, Great Spirit, or God, as well as a sense of connection to all people. And, because everything in our lives is connected, applying and instilling spirituality and religious issues will assist in dealing with the difficulties that arise in our lives.

Addiction Recovery

Things that bring a person closer to God can lead to a positive change in their behaviour. The implementation of spiritual values also can guide them to think rationally and avoid things that can lead to addiction, as well as change their thinking to be positive and listen to advice. Religion has been identified as a factor that contributes to addiction recovery, and empirical research has been conducted to investigate its role in supporting recovery and reducing relapse (Shuhada et al., 2018).

Conclusion

There are many advantages from the implementation of religion and spiritual elements in counselling process. This is because research indicates that a significant number of clients feel that spiritual and religious concerns in the therapy are necessary and important to resolve (Zenkert et al., 2014; Kennedy et al., 2015). The implementation instils hope in the client's life and makes them happy, even though they have faced numerous challenges in their life. It also aids in coping with mental health issues that have arisen or prompted to seek new perspectives to overcome them. Self-efficacy and self-control are two important aspects that should be considered to help people be more rational and positive in any situation. This implementation also can assist in addiction recovery and relapse. Besides, in helping relationships, the implementation of moral and Islamic principles has a positive effect since spiritual and religious therapy explores the individual's cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects, according to Dunkel (2011); Haghigat (2018). The significance, concept and purpose of life and the crucial ideals are found by the cognitive component. The emotional dimension discusses the factors of optimism, interest and support in the healing process and addresses moral and religious values in the behavioural dimension. In addition, it is also recommended that the counsellor should have prepared themselves with proper knowledge on religion and spiritual before implementing these elements in counselling process to serve and help people with proper intervention.

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