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# The Effect of the Spiritual Counseling Course Within Turkey's Counseling Training Program

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## ABSTRACT

Since 2019, the Spiritual Counseling course has been incorporated into Türkiye's third-year undergraduate program on Psychological Counseling and Guidance. The goal of this study is to examine how this course affects students' perspectives on spirituality in the counseling process and counseling self-efficacy. The study uses a single-group pretest-posttest experimental design that includes 40 students (25 female and 15 male). Over 14 weeks, the study's author presented a weekly two-hour Spiritual Counseling course to the students, with the pretest given in the second week and the posttest in the fourteenth week. The Counselors Attitudes Toward Spirituality Scale and the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale were used to collect data. The data was analyzed using the paired-samples t-test. The results reveal that the spiritual counseling course significantly increased students' positive attitudes toward spirituality in the therapeutic process and their counselor self-efficacy levels. The results are addressed in relation to the literature.

### Keywords:

Counselor attitudes toward spirituality, counselor self-efficacy, counseling training, spirituality, spiritual counseling course, Türkiye.

## 1. Introduction

Many people, including those seeking counseling, deal with spiritual concerns (Cashwell & Young, 2011). In Turkey, 93% of people surveyed in 2021 reported having religious beliefs (KONDA Research & Consultancy, 2022). Religious and spiritual problems are fundamental to many clients' worldviews, whether directly or indirectly. Therefore, having counselors understand these two concepts and know how to address these issues in a therapeutic setting is critical (Gladding & Crockett, 2019).

The primary goal of the counselor training program in Turkey is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to become executive counselors (Evaluation and Accreditation Unit of Counseling and Guidance Education Programs [EACEP], 2022). Many counselors have received training in mental health and various mental difficulties. However, research has shown that counselors are not prepared to deal with spiritual concerns (Henriksen et al., 2015; Hill, 2021; Lu et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2020).

Counselors are expected to handle clients with spiritual interests and concerns who strive for mental health. The field of counseling has recognized the necessity of teaching counselors effective counseling approaches so that they can discuss spiritual issues with their clients and investigate their clients' problems related to these issues (Belaire & Young, 2000; Curtis & Davis, 1999; Ingersoll, 1997). Today, some professional organizations and accreditation institutions have started to deal with clients' spiritual issues (e.g., American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2016; Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling [ASERVIC], 2009; The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016).

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A self-efficacy perspective is crucial in counselor education because counselor self-efficacy is one of the most crucial aspects of efficient counseling (Larson, 1998; Schiele, 2013), and counselor performance is known to be heavily influenced by self-efficacy (Ianneli, 2000). For these reasons, gaining knowledge and awareness in counselor education regarding counseling that addresses spiritual themes is known to be able to benefit students' self-efficacy perceptions and attitudes toward spirituality in the therapeutic process.

### **1.1. Counselor Self-efficacy**

According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is a person's personal beliefs and judgment about their capacity to do a specific activity or complete a specific task. Counselor self-efficacy is described as "one's beliefs or judgments about one's own or another's ability to effectively counsel a client" (Larson & Daniels, 1998, p. 180). Counselor self-efficacy is explored under three main headings. These are basic help abilities, good counseling process management, and effective handling of complex counseling circumstances (Lent et al., 2003). Spirituality training and personal growth, involve cognitive capacities, activities, and talents (Oman et al. 2009). According to Bandura (2003), people's beliefs shape their lives, worldviews, and aspirations, as well as the activities they do to achieve those goals. Some recent studies indicate that spirituality plays a role in self-efficacy (Kasapoğlu, 2022; Rakhshanderou et al., 2021).

Some studies have shown counselor self-efficacy to be increased by courses that foster spiritual awareness in counseling training (Curtis & Glass, 2002; Dobmeier, & Reiner, 2012; Matthews, 2004; Pollock, 2007; Saleem & Hawamdeh, 2022). Van Asselt and Senstock (2009) found spirituality training to have a significant effect on counselors perceived self-efficacy levels. Matthews (2004) investigated the relationship counselors' personal spirituality and spiritual awareness have with counselor self-efficacy. The author concluded that spiritual awareness promotes counselor self-efficacy through personal spirituality. Pollock (2007) explored the connection between counselor self-efficacy and perceived spirituality among graduate counseling students. The study discovered a correlation between spirituality and counselor self-efficacy.

### **1.2. Counselor Attitudes Towards Handling Spiritual Issues in Therapy**

Spiritual attitudes in the therapeutic process are related to how culturally sensitive and ethically sensitive spiritual issues are treated in practice. The dimensions of spiritual sensitivity in the therapeutic process, according to Richards and Bergin (2004, 2005), are providing an open and respectful therapy environment, including spiritual goals when setting goals, not excluding the spiritual aspect when making assessments, using spiritual interventions appropriately, and finally adhering to ethical principles.

Excluding spirituality from the therapeutic process may indicate a refusal to consider it a significant constituent of human behavior (Helminiak, 2001; Ingersoll & Bauer, 2004). However, addressing spiritual issues in the counseling environment can show clients that their beliefs are valued and openly discussable without the client feeling neglected, belittled, or pathologized (Watts, 2001). In a meta-analysis, Hook et al. (2019) compared psychotherapies that have been spiritually adapted to alternative psychotherapies. Their analyses showed that, compared to alternative psychotherapies, spiritually adapted psychotherapies lead to significantly higher levels of recovery in clients' psychological and spiritual functioning.

Even though most counselor candidates believe spirituality or religion is important in the therapeutic process, they have difficulty understanding spirituality and are apprehensive about addressing spiritual themes (Henriksen et al., 2015; Schulte et al., 2002). Studies have indicated that many graduates and students of counseling training programs do not consider themselves to have been adequately trained or prepared for using interventions that rely on a client's spirituality or that involve spiritual elements (Adams et al., 2015; Bloomquist, 2017; Chou & Bermender, 2011; Dobmeier & Reiner, 2012; Hill, 2021; Lu et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2020; Van Asselt & Senstock, 2009). On the other side, if counseling students do not receive spiritual or religious training, they may unknowingly force their own ideas and values on clients (Souza, 2002).

### **1.3. The Spiritual Counseling Course in Undergraduate Education of Counseling**

Like the CACREP (2016) standards, the EACEP (2022) standards in Türkiye also require counseling training programs to develop curricula that support the growth of the human spirit and a state of well-being. ASERVIC (2009) created skills for incorporating the spiritual component into counseling. Two spirituality summits were hosted by ASERVIC to discuss ways to address spiritual themes in counseling practices. These summits

concluded that spiritual competencies for integrating spirituality in practice are critical. These competencies were created in accordance with current accreditation standards that evaluate spiritual issues in a variety of cultural contexts as a core requirement of the counseling training curriculum (Robertson, 2010). As a result, spiritual competencies have become required qualifications for counselors who approach counseling holistically.

According to the multicultural perspective, spiritual beliefs are a core element of a client's culture. Therefore, counselors are expected to be aware of their clients' spiritual interests as part of their values and worldviews (Pate & Bondi, 1992). The counseling process is comprised of practices aimed at improving people's wellness (Kaplan et al., 2014). Wellness involves an optimally health-oriented lifestyle and well-being in which the mind and spirit merge (Myers et al., 2000). Spirituality is also one of the life tasks in this wellness model that Myers et al. (2000) created in the field of counseling.

Researchers have begun to accumulate examples of how spirituality may be integrated into counseling training (Bowser et al., 2020; Blalock & Holden, 2018; Briggs & Rayle, 2005; Curtis & Glass, 2002; Hage, 2006; Ingersoll, 1997; Meyer, 2012; Murray et al., 2020; Pate & Hall, 2005). These integration studies have used a variety of methods, such as lectures, class discussions, spiritual autobiographies, role-playing, journal writing, class presentations, spiritual journeys, prayer circles, teaching forgiveness and meditation techniques, panel presentations/guest lecturers, dramas, spiritual readings, and spiritual interviews with pastoral counselors (Bowser et al., 2020; Buser et al., 2013; Curtis & Glass, 2002; Gutierrez et al., 2019; Ingersoll, 1997; Meyer, 2012; Pate & Hall, 2005; Stewart-Sicking et al., 2017; Willow et al., 2009). Meyer (2012), for example, defined drama therapy as an engaging classroom exercise for educators to investigate religion or spirituality. Cashwell and Young (2004) found little consistency when reviewing spirituality-focused training programs and practices, which led the researchers to argue for greater standardization. Bohecker et al. (2017) proposed that the CACREP standards be expanded to include issues such as spirituality/religion, belief development models, and spiritual competencies.

Integrating spirituality education into counselor training programs can help students comprehend the possible role spirituality might have in therapy (Cobb, 2021). In Türkiye, the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) renewed the Guidance and Counseling (GPC) undergraduate programs in 2019. CoHE included the Spiritual Counseling course as a required third-semester class for the GPC undergraduate program. This course's overarching goal is to build an integrative approach to counseling and spirituality.

#### **1.4. The Present Study**

With the addition of the Spiritual Counseling course to the GPC undergraduate program in Turkey, third-year students began taking it in the spring semester of 2021. Students enrolled in this course as part of their counseling education are encouraged to develop greater sensitivity to clients' spiritual needs throughout the therapeutic process in light of the pertinent empirical and theoretical literature. In other words, counselor candidates are expected to be able to cultivate an attitude suitable for establishing a therapeutic relationship with clients that is both spiritually open and safe, for setting spiritual goals during therapy, conducting spiritual evaluations, and appropriately using spiritual interventions. Based on studies such as Curtis & Glass (2002), Saleem and Hawamdeh (2022), and van Asselt & Senstock (2009) that have suggested trainings that foster spiritual awareness to be able to increase counselors' self-efficacy, the Spiritual Counseling course is also thought to be able to positively impact students' self-efficacy perceptions. Students should, in particular, hold more accurate opinions and convictions about their ability to assist a client with spiritual issues. The current study's objective is to determine whether the author's Spiritual Counseling course affects how counselor candidates view dealing with spirituality and how confident they are in their ability to provide counseling. The study is noteworthy for its empirical assessment of a brand-new counseling training course's efficacy. The study's findings may also enable subsequent alterations and updates to the course. The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The Spiritual Counseling course will increase counselor candidates' positive attitudes toward dealing with spirituality in the therapeutic process.

Hypothesis 2: The Spiritual Counseling course will increase counselor candidates' self-efficacy levels.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Model

This study employed a single-group pretest-posttest experimental design. Experimental designs are studies that use variables to evaluate the cause-and-effect relationship. Researchers attempt to observe the impact of at least one independent variable on one or more dependent variables in experimental investigations. In this study, a single-group pretest-posttest experimental design is used to apply an independent variable to a group, with measurements taken before and after the experiment. The difference between the pretest and posttest averages will demonstrate the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable after the measurements (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

This study contains numerous disruptive variables (e.g., counselor trainee motivations and preparation, the supervisor-counselor trainee relationship, and the physical circumstances of the practice space) that are impossible to control. As a result, the single-group pretest-posttest model for this experimental research approach employs a poor experimental design. This study has carefully chosen the proper experimental design by taking into account the study’s requirements and objectives, as well as several elements connected to the technique’s developmental phase. According to Creswell (2012), the single-group experimental design is easily selected in research when a training program is developed and implemented. No control group could be chosen for the study for the following reasons: (1) only one third-year branch in the psychological counselor education program exists in the university where the application has been made; (2) the number of students enrolled in the course was insufficient for forming a control group; and (3) the application had been impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic due to training occurring online. Moreover, similar research employing a single group pretest-posttest experimental design may be found in the literature (e.g., Çınar, 2021; Polatgil, 2020; Sohtaoğlu & Alkar, 2021; Sulistiowati et al., 2021). The applied model is displayed below.

One-Group Posttest Model	Pretest-	Group	Pretest	Process	Posttest
		G	O <sub>1</sub>	X	O <sub>2</sub>
		Experiment	CASCS CSES	Spiritual Counseling Course	CASCS CSES

Note: CASCS = Counselor Attitudes Towards Spirituality in Counseling Scale (Kasapoğlu, 2020), CSES Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Demirel, 2013).

### 2.2. Working Group

The study included third-year students from a public university’s guidance and counseling program. The working group consisted of 40 volunteer students. In the study, the convenience sampling method, a non-random sample approach, was used. The convenience sampling method is described as gathering data from a sample that is easily accessible to the researcher (Büyüköztürk et al., 2015). Male students account for 37.5% (15) of the participants, while female students account for 62.5% (25) of the participants. The average age of the participants was 22 years (M = 21.58, SD = 1.28). Half of the participants classified themselves as spiritual, and the other half as both spiritual and religious. Written informed consent about the study was obtained from the students. Students voluntarily participated in the study and received no bonus points for their participation.

### 2.3. Instruments

*Counselor Attitudes Towards Spirituality in Counseling Scale (CASCS)*: The scale was developed by Kasapoğlu (2020) to measure counselors’ attitudes toward dealing with spiritual issues in the psychological counseling process. The CASCS is a 5-point Likert-type scale with 7 items. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis were performed on the scale. As a result of the analyses, it was revealed that the scale explained 62.77% of the total variance and was a one-dimensional structure. The resulting structure has acceptable goodness-of-fit values (RMSEA = .04, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, NFI = .98, GFI = .98, AGFI = .95). Cronbach’s alpha of reliability was found to be .89, and the test-retest coefficient with three weeks in between to be .88; the t values for the upper and lower 27th percentiles are significant (p = .000). A few examples of the items from the CASCS include: “I find using spiritual techniques in counseling in addition to my basic theoretical counseling approach to be appropriate.” “I think a consultation that ignores the client’s spiritual aspects will be incomplete,” and “When setting goals in

*counseling, I consider the client's spiritual perspective".* In this study, Cronbach's alpha of reliability was calculated for the CASCS .85.

*Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES):* This scale was developed by Demirel (2013) to measure the self-efficacy levels of psychological counselors and counselor candidates. The CSES is a 5-point Likert-type scale with 13 items. According to the exploratory factor analysis, the scale has two subdimensions: the subdimension of providing effective service (with 9 items) and the subdimension of communicating with clients (with 4 items). Possible scores range from 13 to 65. To determine the concurrent validity, the scale has been compared with the General Belief in Self-Efficacy Scale (Aypay, 2010), and the correlation between the two scales was found to be .58. Cronbach's alpha of reliability is .88 for the first factor and .75 for the second. The test-retest reliability after four weeks is .89 for the first factor and .88 for the second. A few examples of items from the CSES include: "I have sufficient skills for applying the appropriate exercises in line with my client's goal," "I am able to determine the necessary intervention methods to best help my client during the psychological counseling process," and "I am able to convey my unconditional respect to my client and help them open up better". In this study, as for reliability, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the CSES .64.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

Data were collected from students who took the Spiritual Counseling course in the spring semester of 2021. The pretest was administered in the second week and the posttest in the fourteenth. The study examined the 40 participants' data. Power analysis (G-Power 3.1.3) was performed to decide the sample size (Ellis, 2010). The power level in the analysis was .85, the significance level was .05, and the effect size was .5. The power analysis determined that 38 samples were a suitable number.

Descriptive statistics were first computed. To determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two successive collections of data from the same sample, a paired-samples t-test was next performed. The difference between the two sets of data needs to be evenly distributed for this test to produce trustworthy results (Field, 2015). After calculating the difference in scores, the new variable's normalcy was checked. Table 2 presents the findings of the normalcy test. By dividing the difference between the means of the two measures by the standard deviation of the score difference, the effect size (Cohen's d) for the matched samples was computed (Green & Salkind, 2014).

*The validity of the measures has also been addressed in the experimental study.* Internal validity reveals whether or not the change in the dependent variable in the experiment was actually caused by the independent variable (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2017). For this study's internal validity, a 12-week break was left between the pretest and posttest applications so that the items might be forgotten, thus minimizing the probability of remembering the items and ensuring impartiality. In order to increase the internal validity of the research, attention was paid to ensuring that the same participants took the pretest and posttest. As for external validity, when considering the limited characteristics of the experiment's participants, the results are not generalizable to individuals who do not have the participants' characteristics (Creswell, 2016). As for reliability, Cronbach's alpha of reliability was calculated for the CASCS and CSES and found to be .85 and .64, respectively.

## 2.5. Ethical

The Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board of Istanbul 29 Mayıs University gave its approval to the study (Decision Number: 2021/06-03).

## 2.6. Process

The study's author taught the Spiritual Counseling course to third-year GPC students for 14 weeks, 2 hours a week, during the 2021 spring semester. The study was taught live in an online environment through the Moodle system.

In broad terms, the aim of the course is to develop an approach that integrates psychological counseling with spirituality. According to the Republic of Turkey Council of Higher Education (CoHE) curriculum, the content of the course includes: a) the basic concepts and history of spiritual counseling; b) psychological counseling theories and spirituality; c) cultural foundations of spiritual counseling; d) religious traditions, beliefs, and spiritual counseling; e) spiritual counseling competencies; f) measurement in spiritual counseling; g) spiritual counseling techniques; and h) ethics in spiritual counseling. In this context, both the course textbook and

related articles were used. The textbook *Spiritual-Oriented Psychological Counseling*, edited by Ekşi (2020), was recommended to the students as a reference textbook. In addition, the course includes articles related to the course content, such as articles on how to integrate spirituality into the therapeutic process (Burke et al., 2005; Pargament, 2011); the historical development of the relationship between psychology and spirituality (Powers, 2005; Wilson, 2011) and its classifications (Nelson, 2009; Sperry & Mansager, 2007; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000); the definition of spirituality (Hill et al., 2000; Koenig, 2018; Pargament, 2011); spirituality and mental health (Aten & Leach, 2009; Koenig, 2018); multicultural counseling (Fukuyama, 1990); a comparison of spiritually-oriented therapies with pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, and traditional psychotherapies (Sperry, 2012); counseling theories' perspectives toward spirituality (Ekşi, 2017; Sperry & Shafranske, 2005); how to evaluate spirituality in the therapeutic process; and spiritual techniques (Hodge, 2013; Richards & Bergin, 2004; Pargament & Krumrei, 2009; Oakes & Raphael, 2008), spiritual competencies (ASERVIC, 2009), and ethical principles (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014).

An appropriate set of content was thus created. The course involves lectures, discussions, questions and answers, brainstorming, guest lecturers, and group presentations. For instance, a question-and-answer, discussion, and brainstorming session occurred on the potential reasons for integrating spirituality into psychological counseling. An expert clinical psychologist was invited as a guest lecturer on counseling theories on spirituality. The guest lecturer gave a seminar to the students on spiritually oriented cognitive behavioral therapy. Case studies on evaluations of spirituality in counseling and experiential exercises were used. At this phase, the volunteer students drew and presented a spiritual life map and a spiritual genogram for teaching purposes. In addition, the students were assigned to review and report on one article concerning a subject within the course.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Results from the Normality Test

The results from the normality test regarding the difference in scores for satisfying the assumptions of the paired-sample t test are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Normality Tests (N=40)

Measurement	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro-Wilk (p)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (p)
CSES-Difference	.74	.198	.376	.981(.74)	.111(.20)
CASCS-Difference	.60	-.368	-.719	.946(.06)	.127(.10)

As displayed in Table 1 regarding the differences between the pretest and posttest scores from the counseling self-efficacy and attitudes toward spirituality in the therapeutic relationship, the skewness (.198 and -.368, respectively) and kurtosis (.376 and -.719, respectively) values indicate a normal distribution. In addition, the results from the Shapiro-Wilk test ( $p > .05$  and  $p > .05$ , respectively) and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ( $p > .05$  and  $p > .05$ , respectively) confirm normality.

#### 3.2. Results from the Paired-Samples t-Test

The means and standard deviations from the pretest and posttest scores regarding the dependent variable and the paired-sample t-test results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** t-Test for Paired Samples

Dependent Variables	M	SD	df	t	p
CSES - Pretest	43.5	4.13	39	-3,863	.000
CSES - Posttest	48.22	6.43			
CASCS - Pretest	23.93	4.61	39	-3,259	.002
CASCS - Posttest	27.33	5.12			

When comparing the participants' pretest self-efficacy scores ( $M = 43.5$  and pretest attitudes toward spirituality in therapy scores ( $M = 23.93$ ) with the posttest score averages ( $M = 48.22$  and  $M = 27.33$ , respectively) from the spiritual counseling course using a paired-samples t-test, the posttest scores are significantly higher than the pretest scores ( $t_{(39)} = -3.86$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $t_{(39)} = -3.26$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively). Cohen's  $d$  indicates the course to have had a medium effect size ( $d = .06$  and  $d = .5$ , respectively, for the pretest and

posttest). Based on these results, the study's first and second hypotheses are supported: the Spiritual Counseling course significantly increased students' positive attitudes toward spirituality in the therapeutic process as well as their counseling self-efficacy levels.

According to demographic factors, pre-test and post-test scores were compared, and the findings are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *t-Test Pretest and Posttest Scores*

		Variables	N	M	SD	df	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
CSES- Pretest	<i>Gender</i>	Male	15	44.86	3.62	38	1.656	.106
		Female	25	42.68	4.26			
	<i>Affiliation</i>	Spiritual	20	44.35	4.17		1.313	.197
		Both spiritual and religious	20	42.65	4.02			
CSES- Posttest	<i>Gender</i>	Male	15	49.00	8.15	38	.585	.562
		Female	25	47.76	5.28			
	<i>Affiliation</i>	Spiritual	20	47.85	6.80		-.365	.717
		Both spiritual and religious	20	48.60	6.19			
CASCS -Pretest	<i>Gender</i>	Male	15	22.53	5.41	38	-1.503	.141
		Female	25	24.76	4.27			
	<i>Affiliation</i>	Spiritual	20	22.70	5.31		-1.723	.093
		Both spiritual and religious	20	25.15	3.50			
CASCS – Posttest	<i>Gender</i>	Male	15	26.67	5.89	38	-.625	.535
		Female	25	27.72	4.66			
	<i>Affiliation</i>	Spiritual	20	26.80	5.68		-.644	.523
		Both spiritual and religious	20	27.85	4.57			

Table 3 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the gender variable between the CSES and CASCS pretest and posttest, scores [pretest, respectively:  $t = 1.656, p > .05$ ,  $t = -1.503, p > .05$ ; posttest respectively:  $t = .585, p > .05$ ,  $t = -.625, p > .05$ ]. The table also shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the self-evaluation variable between CSES and CASCS pretest and posttest scores [pretest, respectively:  $t = 1.313, p > .05$ ,  $t = -1.723, p > .05$ ; posttest, respectively:  $t = -.365, p > .05$ ,  $t = -.644, p > .05$ ].

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

The present study has investigated the effect of a spiritual counseling course on counselor candidates' attitudes toward spirituality in the therapeutic process and on their counseling self-efficacy levels. In this context, the course has adopted a teaching approach consisting of questions-and-answers, brainstorming, and classroom presentations. A guest speaker has been invited to the class. A guest speaker held a seminar on the spiritually-oriented cognitive-behavioral approach. In addition, students were required to review and report on an article.

The study's first hypothesis, stating that the spiritual counseling course would increase students' positive attitudes toward spirituality in the therapeutic process, has been confirmed. During the course, students were presented with information about the reasoning behind integrating spirituality into counseling using research findings examining the relationship spirituality has with mental health and well-being. Also included were case studies and meta-analysis findings on the effectiveness of spiritually-oriented psychotherapies. Thus, the knowledge, skills, and experiences in counseling and spirituality that the students acquired at the end of the course were effective in helping them become more sensitive to and considerate toward the client's spirituality in the therapeutic process. In other words, counselor candidates became more inclined to consider client spirituality in evaluations during the therapeutic process and for determining counseling goals and therapy techniques. However, more than one variable should be stated as having the ability to have caused a positive improvement in students' attitudes toward spirituality after the spiritual counseling course.

The current study's findings on the first hypothesis are similar to prior research' findings. For example, Curtis and Glass (2002) found that counselor students who had taken the Spirituality and Counseling course reported

increased sensitivity and awareness of the benefits of integrating spirituality into counseling. Pate and Hall (2005) used a counseling and spirituality curriculum with counselor candidates. The curriculum is intended to encourage both clients' spiritual dimensions and counselor candidates to consider how their own spiritual views may affect the counseling process and practice. This course practice has underlined the need for counselors to recognize and understand the value of spirituality in their clients' lives.

Ingersoll (1997) presented a CACREP-approved course on counseling and spirituality to counseling students. In this way, students became more sensitive to spirituality. Similarly, Henriksen et al. (2015) performed a study with a group of psychological counseling doctoral and graduate students. The researchers asked students about their training in integrating spirituality into therapy methods. As a result of these interviews, five major themes emerged: self-discovery, personal growth, extra education and training, stimulation, and supervision. The concept of personal progress is organized into four sub-themes: awareness, sensitivity, knowledge, and understanding. For example, one participant stated of the awareness sub-theme, "We learned not to pressure clients about their beliefs but to be open to them and accept them as they are."

Dobmeier and Reiner (2012) investigated how counseling students evaluate their spiritual competence. Students said that spiritual themes were covered in their education and that they were prepared to deal with spiritual matters in general in their practice. Providing information on ASERVIC's (2009) spiritual competence in the spiritual counseling course may have also had an impact on students having favorable views about spiritual matters. According to Hagedon and Moorhead (2011), counselors should raise their level of self-discovery because it is tied to their own views, values, and attitudes. ASERVIC (2009) also backed this up, with ASERVIC competencies highlighting counselors' need for self-awareness.

When appropriate, addressing spiritual issues in the therapeutic process can demonstrate to clients that such issues can be discussed without being belittled, neglected, or pathologized, that their beliefs are valued (Watts, 2001), and that they themselves are respected. Conversely, excluding the universal human quality that is spirituality (Helminiak, 2001; Ingersoll & Bauer, 2004) from the therapeutic process may decrease the effectiveness of the process and lead to early termination (Curtis & Davis, 1999). Counselors risk being irresponsible and undermining a vital component of their clients' existence until the counseling profession takes a firmer stand on the integration of spirituality into counseling (Bohecker et al., 2017). The ACA Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014), on the other hand, highlights the importance of counselors exploring their own spiritual beliefs in order to assist clients who wish to achieve their spiritual needs. The CACREP (2016) and EACEP (2022) standards both require counselor training programs to offer courses that promote the growth of the human spirit and optimal well-being. These standards aim to sensitize students to enable them to detect and meet the spiritual needs of their customers while also educating them to recognize and comprehend their own spirituality. The current study has also attempted this.

The current study's other prediction, that a spiritual counseling course will considerably raise students' counselor self-efficacy levels, has been confirmed. Counselor self-efficacy levels increased as students acquired knowledge about spirituality, and spiritual competencies; the comparison of spiritually oriented therapy with pastoral counseling, spiritual guidance, and general psychotherapies; and the perspectives of psychological counseling theories (e.g., psychodynamic, cognitive, humanist, transpersonal, and postmodern approaches) on spirituality and its evaluation; spiritual competencies, ethical principles; and potential spiritual techniques. In other words, the counselor candidates' sense of adequacy regarding their skills and knowledge and belief that they could be helpful to clients increased. Meanwhile, it is important to remember that the increase in counselor self-efficacy following the spiritual counseling course could be due to multiple factors.

There is no study that can directly compare the outcomes of the second hypothesis of the investigation. However, the obtained results can be linked to studies looking into the links between spiritual awareness and multicultural counseling competency, as well as counselor self-efficacy beliefs. Because spirituality is included in multicultural counseling. The findings of the second hypothesis are consistent with previous research on the association between spiritual awareness and self-efficacy (Cobb, 2021; Curtis and Glass, 2002; Lu et al., 2020; Matthews, 2004, Subarimaniyam et al., 2021; Van Asselt and Senstock, 2009). According to Lu et al. (2020), there is a favorable association between trained counselors' spiritual efficacy and self-efficacy.

Cates et al. (2007) found that culturally sensitive counseling students displayed higher levels of self-efficacy compared to students who did not receive multicultural counseling training. Similar results were obtained in



various studies (Crook, 2010; Liu et al., 2004; Owens et al., 2010). According to field experts, culture has an important role in almost all fields of practice (Sue et al., 1992).

According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy can be increased by gaining more awareness, experiences, and skills. Counselors with high levels of self-efficacy conduct successful treatment sessions, face problems, and are confident in their basic helping skills (Lent et al., 2003). Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to attain their goals. If the counselor students' purpose is to meet the aims of the counseling sessions, they are required to be especially effective at ethical and legal problems. Understanding values and self-knowledge, for example, are spiritual components that might contribute to self-efficacy beliefs. As a result, fostering spirituality assists counselor students in developing self-awareness, which eventually leads to self-efficacy in dealing with ethical and legal quandaries (Subarimaniam et al., 2021).

Spirituality is now recognized as an important component of counselor training (see Dobmeier & Reiner, 2012). Because counselor training programs play an important role in training qualified counselors, researchers have revealed an increase in calls for this type of counseling (Bohecker et al., 2017; CACREP, 2016; Curtis & Glass, 2002). Based on this call, the spiritual counseling course can be said to help students grasp the significance of spirituality in therapy.

The current study's findings should be interpreted cautiously. The lack of a control group in the study restricts the assumption that the intervention resulted in gains in scores for the relevant variables. The fact that half of the study group identified as religious and spiritual could have influenced the findings. Another problem is that the study's findings are based on data acquired via self-report scales, which are susceptible to bias. Another potential limitation is that the course in question was taught through distance learning. Additionally, the study was conducted only within the GPC program at a public university, and thus its generalizability to GPC programs elsewhere is limited. Lastly, because the CASCs and CSES are scales that measure impressions and not actual performance, the present findings are limited in shedding light on how to improve actual student performances in dealing with client spirituality. Future research may focus on how students, with supervision, experience spirituality as a tool for intervention in the therapeutic process.

## 5. Recommendations

The present study examined the relationship between a spiritual counseling course and attitudes towards spirituality in the therapeutic process and counseling self-efficacy. This experimental study can be repeated with a control group. In addition, similar studies can be supported by qualitative data. This research was conducted with undergraduate students. The results can be compared by giving counseling and spirituality training to graduate counseling students and counselors with different spiritual values. Future research may investigate whether or not such a course affects students' spiritual adequacy. Likewise, examining students' spiritual adequacy in relation to other variables such as well-being, effective counseling qualities, or multicultural counseling skills may prove beneficial. Research on spirituality in counseling training is still new in Turkey, and the topic thus requires further scientific study.

The present study has shown that the spiritual counseling course within the counseling training program in Turkey impacts students' sensitivity toward client spirituality, their sense of self-efficacy regarding their skills and knowledge, and their belief that they can be beneficial to clients. The fact that spirituality has significant and powerful value in the lives of many clients and that it needs to be a part of the therapeutic process entails the need for a spiritual counseling course to be integrated into the curriculum of counseling training programs. In the meantime, the content of such a course can be readjusted based on the findings of future studies.

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