

The Effect of Value-Based Folk Songs and Spiritual Care and Empowerment Practices on the Psychological Well-Being and Spirituality Levels of Faculty of Theology Students

Fatma Ulu^{1*}

¹ Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, TURKEY

*Corresponding Author: fatmaulu@mu.edu.tr

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of spiritual care and empowerment practices supported by value-based folk songs on the psychological health and spiritual well-being levels of Faculty of Theology students. The aim of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the aforementioned practice in reducing anxiety, depression, negative self-perception, somatisation, and hostility levels and increasing spiritual well-being. The research was conducted with students aged 18–23 studying at the Faculty of Theology of a state university in Türkiye during the 2023–2024 academic year. A quantitative research method was adopted, utilising a pre-test–post-test design with experimental and control groups. Fifty students, selected through purposive sampling, were randomly assigned to the experimental (n=25) and control (n=25) groups. The Brief Symptom Inventory and Spirituality Scale were used as data collection tools. The experimental group underwent spiritual care and empowerment sessions accompanied by value-laden folk songs for eight weeks; no intervention was applied to the control group. Data were collected through pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test three months later and analysed using SPSS software. The findings indicate that the application significantly reduced the psychological symptom levels of students in the experimental group and significantly increased their spiritual well-being levels. Furthermore, negative correlations were found between spirituality and anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatisation, and hostility. This study contributes to cross-cultural psychology and spiritual well-being literature by integrating traditional Turkish folk songs into an experimental design. The research results reveal that spiritual care applications supported by value-based folk songs are an effective method for the psychological health and spiritual development of young adults.

Keywords: The Psychology of Religion, Folk Song, Spirituality, Values, Anxiety, Depression

INTRODUCTION

The concept of spirituality, which was largely identified with religious identity in the early twentieth century, has evolved alongside developments in contemporary psychology and health sciences into a multidimensional phenomenon centered on the individual's search for the sacred (Düzgüner, 2021). In the literature, there is no absolute consensus regarding the definition of spirituality. Pargament (2007) defines spirituality as an orientation toward the sacred or transcendent, while Emmons (1999) emphasizes the process of meaning-seeking and self-transcendence. Hill and Pargament (2003) highlight spirituality's relationship with religion, whereas Özdoğan (2006) argues that spirituality extends beyond religion by encompassing individuals' needs for values, belonging, and meaning.

Therefore, spirituality cannot be considered a purely secular construct nor confined solely within religious boundaries (Dağcı, 2020). This inclusive perspective frames spirituality as a multidimensional structure integrating fundamental human needs such as the desire for being valued, belonging, connection, love, and self-realization. In

the present study, spirituality is conceptualized as a holistic phenomenon that is not restricted to religious attributes but, when relevant, may include them. The Spirituality Scale (Hatipoğlu, 2022) used in this research operationalizes this perspective by measuring four interrelated dimensions: being, belonging, finding meaning, and self-transcendence.

Human beings, as integrative entities composed of physical and psychological dimensions, require the fulfillment of not only biological but also spiritual needs (Yağlı & Özdoğan, 2019). Elements such as meaning-making, acceptance, self-esteem, friendship, and social-psychological support constitute the core components of spirituality, shaping individuals' inner sense of well-being. Just as health, nutrition, shelter, and education are essential to human development, recognizing and addressing spiritual needs plays a critical role in fostering cultural, religious, and moral identity (Lam et al., 2020; Moreira-Almeida et al., 2014). Individuals whose spiritual needs are met tend to experience stronger, more independent, and more self-confident emotional states (Özdoğan, 2010). Current research indicates that spirituality occupies a central position within the hierarchy of human needs (Özdoğan, 2006). Accordingly, identifying the spiritual needs of youth and implementing spiritually empowering programs—supported by interventions such as music therapy—has become an important concern (Pingle, 2024).

Spiritual needs function as key determinants not only of physical but also of psychological and social well-being. The way individuals interpret life experiences is directly related to their subjective spirituality level and mediates their ability to perceive themselves as holistic beings (Machado et al., 2021). Neglecting these needs increases the risk of loneliness, depression, and stress (Bonelli et al., 2012). Empirical findings demonstrate that fulfilling spiritual needs enhances self-confidence, strengthens psychological resilience, and enables individuals to cope more effectively with life's challenges (Matziorinis & Koelsch, 2020). Within this context, music emerges as a powerful medium for supporting these needs. Music therapy facilitates individuals' connection with their inner worlds, fosters spiritual fulfillment, and reinforces the sense of belonging through its unifying group-based function (Lu et al., 2021). Moreover, music provides an expressive channel through which individuals articulate spiritual values, beliefs, and existential meanings.

Empirical research examining the effects of spirituality on physical and psychological well-being consistently highlights spirituality as an indispensable component of a healthy life (Yunitasari, 2020). Among disadvantaged populations or individuals facing restrictive conditions such as disability, these circumstances often exert a negative influence on spirituality. For instance, Peirce and colleagues reported a positive relationship between perceived social support and spirituality, and a negative relationship between spirituality and depressive symptoms (Ghorbani et al., 2021). Similarly, studies have consistently shown that spirituality and perceived social support are inversely related to stress, while perceived social support is positively associated with spirituality and other psychological well-being indicators (Grey et al., 2020).

Music therapy stands out as an effective intervention in supporting emotional, psychological, and social well-being (Baines, 2021). Music functions as a regulatory mechanism for emotions, enabling the nonverbal expression of inner experiences through art. Recent studies show that music therapy fosters not only emotional but also spiritual healing (Murakami, 2021; Vaudreuil et al., 2022). Music therapists develop individualized treatment protocols to address emotional and spiritual needs, assisting clients in achieving inner peace, coping with stress, and rebuilding psychological resilience (Eseadi & Ngwu, 2023). Numerous studies have demonstrated that music therapy provides spiritual support by reducing stress, managing grief, enhancing self-confidence, and promoting overall mental health (Mayer-Benarous et al., 2021). Furthermore, music facilitates self-expression and social interaction, thereby strengthening spiritual satisfaction. Hence, music therapy can be regarded as one of the most effective approaches for fulfilling spiritual needs and enhancing holistic well-being (Grey-Cortés et al., 2023).

Music therapy, as an intervention capable of meaningfully transforming emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns, shares common goals with spiritual care and empowerment practices (Leonard, 2020). Both approaches aim to activate individuals' spiritual resources, promote psychological well-being, and foster holistic healing (Punkanen, 2011). Kirkland et al. (2014), for instance, found that combining music therapy with spiritual empowerment in individuals diagnosed with dementia yielded multidimensional benefits, including social connectedness, adaptation, participation, sense of identity, belonging, engagement, interaction, expression, positive mood, and relaxation.

The integration of music therapy, psychotherapy, and spiritual care has been shown to significantly assist individuals in coping with pain (Li et al., 2021; Renz et al., 2005). Empirical studies further reveal that music therapy operates across multiple layers: physiologically, it alleviates pain and agitation; psychosocially, it enhances nonverbal communication, reduces anxiety and depression, and facilitates social reintegration; cognitively, it improves adaptability and treatment acceptance; and spiritually, it promotes forgiveness, nurtures creativity, and strengthens hope (Leonard, 2020; Shirsat et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2020). Similarly, spiritual care aims to enhance spiritual awareness, foster peace, and ascribe meaning to suffering (Vaudreuil et al., 2022). Taken together, these parallels demonstrate that music therapy and spiritual care share substantial overlap in objectives and outcomes (Karslı, 2019). Nonetheless, while research on general effects of music therapy has expanded, empirical studies focusing

on music's use within the context of spiritual empowerment and care remain limited (Baines, 2021; Li et al., 2021; Pingle & Ragha, 2024). This gap highlights the need for rigorous research examining the effects of value-based folk songs as a culturally embedded component of holistic spiritual care among young adults.

In collectivist societies such as Türkiye, individual identity and spiritual experience are deeply intertwined with shared cultural symbols and collective meaning-making processes. Cultural psychology emphasizes that psychological processes are not universal but are shaped by cultural contexts that define how people think, feel, and relate to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder, 2003). Within this framework, value-based folk songs function as cultural vehicles that transmit moral ideals, foster belonging, and facilitate self-transcendence—the movement beyond the self toward unity with others and the sacred. Triandis (1995) highlights that collectivist cultural patterns encourage individuals to define the self in relation to social harmony and shared values. Folk songs in this context serve not only as aesthetic expressions but also as symbolic rituals reinforcing communal bonds and spiritual identity. Therefore, the integration of folk music and spiritual care in this study can be interpreted as a culturally embedded mechanism that supports psychological resilience and self-transcendent growth. This approach bridges the individual's inner transformation with collective cultural heritage, reflecting how spirituality is lived and shared in community-centered societies.

Purpose of the Study

The central research question of this study was formulated as follows:

“What is the effect of spiritual care and empowerment practices supported by value-based folk songs on the psychological health and spiritual well-being levels of university students?”

Accordingly, the main purpose of this research was to examine the effects of an eight-week Value-Based Folk Songs and Spiritual Empowerment Program on the levels of depression, anxiety, negative self-concept, somatization, hostility, and spiritual well-being among undergraduate students enrolled in a Faculty of Theology. The study aimed to evaluate the program's overall effectiveness in reducing psychological distress while enhancing participants' spiritual growth and well-being.

This focus is grounded in the growing body of empirical evidence suggesting that culturally rooted spiritual interventions—particularly those integrating music and value education—can strengthen resilience, reduce mental health symptoms, and deepen individuals' sense of existential meaning. Folk songs, as cultural products that reflect the moral and emotional heritage of a community, were employed in this study as both therapeutic and educational tools to foster reflection, belonging, and spiritual empowerment among young adults.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and previous findings in the literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: The anxiety levels of students who participate in the *Value-Based Folk Songs and Spiritual Empowerment Program* will significantly decrease compared to those in the control group.

H2: The program will significantly reduce the depression levels of students in the experimental group.

H3: The program will significantly reduce negative self-perceptions among students in the experimental group.

H4: The program will significantly decrease somatization levels among students in the experimental group.

H5: The program will significantly reduce hostility (aggression) levels among students in the experimental group.

H6: The program will significantly increase the spiritual well-being levels of students in the experimental group.

H7: There will be negative correlations between spirituality and anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility.

METHOD

Research Model

Within the scope of the quantitative research method, an experimental research design was used in this study. In order to test the effect of a certain intervention and practice, a true experimental design with a control group pre-test–post-test pattern was preferred. Pre-test and post-test measurements were made on the participants in terms of the variables of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, hostility, and spirituality. In the experimental group, an eight-week spiritual care and empowerment practice supported by value-based folk songs was carried out. In the control group, weekly meetings were held during this period for follow-up, but no activity or practice was conducted. At the end of the eight-week period, post-tests were administered to both the experimental and control groups to evaluate anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, hostility, and

spirituality. After the completion of the practices, in addition to the previous measurements, the scales were re-administered to the participants in the experimental group as a follow-up test three months (12 weeks) later. In experimental studies, an increase or decrease in the scores of the experimental group is an expected finding and indicates the effectiveness of the applied intervention or program (Balakrishnan, 2021). Therefore, with the pre-test and post-test applications and the eight-week spiritual care and empowerment practice supported by value-based folk songs, a decrease in the variables of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility and an increase in spirituality levels are expected. The individuals included in the study and the experimental model applied are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Model

Group	Pre-test	Procedure	Post-test	Follow-up Test
Experimental Group	25	Spiritual Care and Empowerment Program Supported by Value-Based Folk Songs	25	25
Control Group	25		25	25

In line with the model, the spiritual care and empowerment practice supported by value-based folk songs was applied only to the experimental group. The application lasted for eight weeks, and at the end of this period, post-tests were administered to both groups. In addition, in order to determine the permanence of the application, a follow-up test was administered to the experimental group three months later.

Study Group

Students studying at the Faculty of Theology of a state university in the 2024–2025 academic year were included in the study. The fact that the sample group consisted of students from the Faculty of Theology was taken into consideration in terms of accessibility and suitability for the purpose of the research. In the pre-test application of the group included in the study, equivalence between the groups was ensured by measuring these characteristics. The determined 50 people were randomly divided into two groups as 25 experimental and 25 control groups. In this study, the purposive sampling method was preferred by selecting individuals with certain characteristics suitable for the purpose of the research. The purposive sampling method ensures that the results of the research are more reliable and valid. The fact that the experimental and control groups consisted of an equal number of individuals is important for making comparative analyses.

Table 2: Distribution of Students Participating in the Research by Gender and Grade Level

		Experimental		Control	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	15	60	13	52
	Male	10	40	12	48
Grade Level	2nd Year	13	52	12	48
	3rd Year	12	48	13	52
Age	18–20 years	9	36	11	44
	21–23 years	16	64	14	56
Faculty	Theology	25	100	25	100
Accommodation	KYK Dormitory	12	48	13	52
	Apartment / Student House	9	36	7	28
	With Family	4	16	5	20
Total		25	100	25	100

When the experimental group of students participating in the study was examined, it was determined that 60% were female and 40% were male by gender; 52% were second-year students and 48% were third-year students by class level; 36% were in the 18–20 age group and 64% were in the 21–23 age group by age; and 48% stayed in the KYK dormitory, 36% in apartments/student houses, and 16% with their families by accommodation status.

When the control group of students participating in the study was examined, it was determined that 52% were female and 48% were male by gender; 48% were second-year students and 52% were third-year students by class level; 44% were in the 18–20 age group and 56% were in the 21–23 age group by age; and 52% stayed in the KYK dormitory, 28% in apartments/student houses, and 20% with their families by accommodation status.

Data Collection Tools

In the research, the Brief Symptom Inventory and the Spirituality Scale were used as data collection tools. The Brief Symptom Inventory, developed by Şahin and Durak (1994), consists of 53 items and measures five different psychological characteristics such as anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility. The scale was prepared in a five-point Likert type, and the psychological statements included in the scale are scored as none (1) and very severe (5). In the study conducted by Şahin and Durak (1994), the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as .95, and the total variance explained in five dimensions was found to be 66.2%.

The Spirituality Scale used in the research was developed by Hatipoğlu (2022) and consists of 54 items and four sub-dimensions: being, belonging, finding meaning, and self-transcendence. The total variance explained by the scale in four factors was determined as 68.51%, and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the overall scale was found to be .91. The AVE values for each sub-dimension of the scale were determined to be above .60, and the CR values were determined to be above .90. Accordingly, it was determined that the sub-dimensions of the scale were consistent with each other and that the scale had a high level of validity and reliability. In the calculation made for the overall scale, high scores obtained from the scale indicate a high perception of spirituality, while low scores indicate a low perception of spirituality. The scale is scored on a five-point Likert type ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In addition to these data of the scale, as a result of the reliability analysis made with the data obtained within the scope of this research, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the overall scale was determined as .89.

Application

The spiritual care and empowerment program supported by value-based folk songs conducted in the experimental group was structured to improve the psychological health and spiritual well-being levels of individuals. The program was designed as a music- and spirituality-based experiential process. Participants took part in the process not only as listeners but also as active performers and interpreters of the folk songs. Thus, music functioned as a tool for both emotional sharing and spiritual deepening among participants. The program lasted a total of eight weeks, and each week was structured around a spiritual theme. The practices were carried out in a group format in a suitable hall of the university. Each session lasted an average of 60–75 minutes and consisted of three stages:

Preparation and Introduction Stage (10–15 minutes): A short introduction and emotional sharing were conducted with the participants, and reflections from the previous week were evaluated. The group atmosphere was created, and participation was encouraged.

Folk Song Performance and Spiritual Content Stage (30–40 minutes): A folk song compatible with the theme of the week was performed together; the lyrics of the song were analyzed in terms of emotional meanings, metaphors, and the spiritual values it contained. Participants were asked to express the emotions, experiences, and inner awareness that the song evoked in them.

Reflective Sharing and Closing Stage (15–20 minutes): Participants associated the theme of the week with their own life experiences; the session was concluded with a silence or mindfulness exercise.

Table 3: Value-Based Folk Songs and Values Emphasized in Folk Songs

	Song Title	Emphasized Values	Lyrics
First Week	Beni Hor Görme Beni Kardeşim	Equality, brotherhood, respect, tolerance, solidarity	Aşık Veysel
Second Week	Mevla'm Birçok Dert Vermiş Beraber Derman Vermiş	Coping with difficulties, balance, solidarity	Anonim
Thirth Week	Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım	Awareness, coping, patience, perseverance, and determination	Aşık Veysel
Fourth Week	Seyreyle Güzel Kudreti Mevla Neler Eyler	Love is spirituality, inner peace and tranquility, harmony	Alvarlı Efe
Fifth Week	Gel Ha Gönül Havalanma	Humility, awareness, tolerance, patience, spiritual maturity	Anonim
Sixth Week	Dostum Dostum	Friendship, solidarity, loyalty, trust, sharing	Pir Sultan Abdal
Seventh Week	Ne Ağlarsın	Patience, coping, hope	Daimi
Eighth Week	Ağlama Gözlerim Mevla Kerimdir	Hope, patience, inner peace, tranquility	Pir Sultan Abdal

At the end of each session, participants completed short reflection forms and provided verbal feedback to evaluate changes in awareness and group dynamics. The researcher acted as a moderator and facilitator, ensuring emotional safety and constructive interaction. No psychological risks were observed during the sessions. The program enabled participants to experience key spiritual orientations such as respect, tolerance, balance, patience,

empathy, love, humility, and trust in the Creator. The selection of folk songs and the associated spiritual values were reviewed by two experts. Eight value-based Turkish folk songs were used, each reflecting a distinct spiritual theme such as equality (*Beni Hor Görme Beni Kardeşim*), hope (*Ağlama Gözlerim Mevla Kerimdir*), patience (*Ne Ağlarsın*), humility (*Gel Ha Gönül Havalanma*), and divine harmony (*Seyreyle Güzel Kudreti Mevla Neler Eyler*). Collectively, these songs functioned as culturally grounded tools to foster emotional sharing, self-reflection, and spiritual empowerment.

Data Collection

The research data were collected by the researcher. The processes of administering the scales before, during, and after the application were carried out directly by the researcher. Therefore, it was observed that the researcher was familiar with the application process and directly observed the participants and the changes that occurred in them during the applications. The preparation of the eight-week spiritual care and empowerment study supported by value-based folk songs applied in the research was carried out before the study, and this study was evaluated by two experts (Table 3). The applications were evaluated in terms of purpose, content, application process, and presentation stages, and the final version was given according to expert opinions. This provided significant contributions in terms of ensuring the reliability of the research. In addition, the consent of the participants was obtained before the research, the applications were explained, and voluntary participation was ensured. It was also determined that the ethical approval of the research for the applications was granted by the Ethics Committee of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University with the date 06.03.2024, decision number 35, and with protocol number 240025.

Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed using quantitative analysis methods. Accordingly, the data were analyzed using the SPSS 24 statistical software. The analyses were conducted using the data obtained from pre-test (before the application), post-test (after the application), and follow-up test measurements, and these data were evaluated in the form of both within-group and between-group comparisons. The Brief Symptom Inventory was examined in five dimensions: anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility; and the Spirituality Scale was analyzed separately based on the sub-dimensions of being, belonging, finding meaning, and self-transcendence. This approach was preferred because each dimension represents a unique aspect of spirituality and the research focuses on the relationships between these different dimensions. Considering the inclusive nature of the scale, which is not limited to the religious dimension, the independent contribution of each sub-dimension was examined, and the findings were reported based on this detailed evaluation.

In the analyses, the normality distributions of the data were examined according to descriptive statistics, based on skewness and kurtosis coefficients. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the skewness and kurtosis values of the scores were between -1 and +1, and that they showed a normal distribution. Accordingly, parametric statistical techniques were used in the analyses. Within this scope, a dependent samples t-test was applied to determine the differences between the scores. In addition, a correlation analysis was conducted to reveal the relationships between the scales. The confidence interval in the analyses was determined as $p < .05$.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher received training in *bağlama* performance and folk song interpretation from experts in the field, played the *bağlama*, and actively participated in Turkish folk music ensembles. In addition, the researcher's academic studies in the field of spiritual care and empowerment brought both artistic and psychological integrity to the implementation process of the study. Therefore, the researcher has competence and experience in the spiritual effects of folk songs, the integrity of lyrics and melody, and *bağlama* performance. The contents of the spiritual care and empowerment program supported by value-based folk songs, which was implemented practically in the experimental group of the study, were meticulously determined by obtaining the opinions of different researchers who are experts in the field.

The folk songs were selected considering their spiritual meanings and emotional themes, and the structure of each session was planned accordingly. During the implementation process, the performance of the folk songs was carried out directly by the researcher. In each session, the researcher personally played and sang the folk songs with the *bağlama*, strengthening the emotional depth of the group atmosphere through music. In addition, students who could play instruments participated in the sessions with their own instruments, while other students joined in the vocal performance of the folk songs. Thus, the application became a group experience that reinforced both the active musical participation of the participants and the sense of community.

The researcher was responsible for ensuring the harmony between the folk songs and the themes, guiding the transmission of value content, and maintaining group interaction. The administration of the tests, the conduct of the analysis processes, and the preservation of data integrity were also carried out under the direct control of the

researcher. Throughout the implementation process, the researcher maintained the role of moderator and facilitator, guiding the participants in deepening their spiritual awareness.

FINDINGS

The findings regarding the effects of the spiritual care and empowerment practice supported by value-based folk songs on the participants' levels of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, hostility, and spirituality are presented and explained in tables below.

Table 3: Pre-Test–Post-Test Comparison Results Regarding the Effect of the Spiritual Empowerment and Care Program Supported by Value-Based Folk Songs on the Psychological Health and Spiritual Well-Being Levels of the Experimental and Control Groups

		Group	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Experimental Group	Anxiety	Pre-test	25	39,04	6,560	3,369	,001
		Post-test test	25	33,56	4,805		
	Depression	Pre-test	25	36,80	7,624	1,795	,079
		Post-test test	25	33,12	6,852		
	Negative Self-Image	Pre-test	25	35,72	5,841	3,016	,004
		Post-test test	25	30,84	5,595		
	Somatization	Pre-test	25	26,28	5,396	2,896	,000
		Post-test test	25	22,16	4,633		
	Hostility	Pre-test	25	22,84	4,160	2,675	,000
		Post-test test	25	19,92	3,534		
	Existance	Pre-test	25	69,92	5,663	-2,846	,000
		Post-test test	25	74,84	6,529		
	Belonging	Pre-test	25	31,12	2,920	-1,862	,000
		Post-test test	25	32,84	3,578		
	Finding Meaning	Pre-test	25	61,44	3,884	-4,657	,000
		Post-test test	25	67,08	4,645		
Control Group	Anxiety	Pre-test	25	42,32	3,249	-5,525	,000
		Post-test test	25	47,56	3,453		
	Surpassing Yourself	Pre-test	25	209,12	9,355	-5,355	,000
		Post-test test	25	226,56	13,329		
	Anxiety	Pre-test	25	38,76	6,417	-,284	,778
		Post-test test	25	39,28	6,528		
	Depression	Pre-test	25	36,96	7,373	,494	,624
		Post-test test	25	35,96	6,931		
	Negative Self-Image	Pre-test	25	35,88	5,246	-,208	,836
		Post-test test	25	36,20	5,642		
	Somatization	Pre-test	25	26,08	5,187	-,339	,736
		Post-test test	25	26,60	5,656		
	Hostility	Pre-test	25	22,88	3,865	-,071	,944
		Post-test test	25	22,96	4,117		
	Existance	Pre-test	25	69,56	4,528	-,722	,474
		Post-test test	25	70,56	5,236		
	Belonging	Pre-test	25	31,52	2,859	,701	,487
		Post-test test	25	31,00	2,362		
	Finding Meaning	Pre-test	25	62,20	4,618	-1,908	,062
		Post-test test	25	64,80	5,008		
	Surpassing Yourself	Pre-test	25	42,40	3,109	-1,012	,317
		Post-test test	25	43,40	3,840		
	Spirituality Scale	Pre-test	25	210,12	8,785	-1,493	,142
		Post-test test	25	214,00	9,578		

The analyses regarding the effect of the spiritual care and empowerment program supported by value-based folk songs on psychological health indicators revealed statistically significant differences between the pre-test (before the application) and post-test (after the application) scores in the group of 25 students. A detailed examination of this difference showed that the symptoms of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility, which were observed at a high level in the pre-test, significantly decreased in the post-test ($p < .05$). The analyses related to the Spirituality Scale showed that the post-test scores increased statistically significantly compared to the pre-test scores ($p < .05$). Similarly, significant increases were found in each of the sub-dimensions of the scale—being, belonging, finding meaning, and self-transcendence.

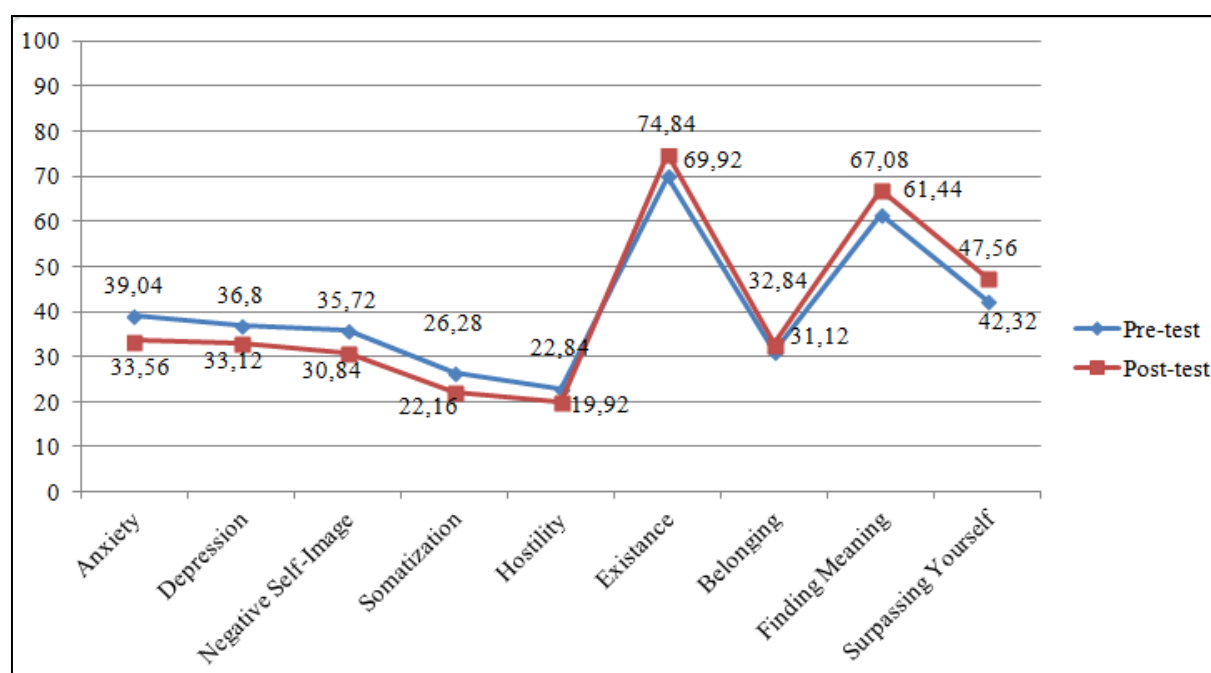
In the control group, no statistically significant difference was found between the pre-test and post-test scores for the sub-dimensions of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility ($p > .05$). Likewise, no statistically significant change was observed in the sub-dimension scores of the Spirituality Scale, namely being, belonging, finding meaning, and self-transcendence.

Table 4: Post-Test–Follow-Up Test Comparison Results Regarding the Effect of the Spiritual Empowerment and Care Program Supported by Value-Based Folk Songs on the Psychological Health and Spiritual Well-Being Levels of the Experimental Group

		Group	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Experimental Group	Anxiety	Post-test	25	33,56	4,805	1,414	,164
		Persistence	25	31,80	3,958		
	Depression	Post-test	25	33,12	6,851	1,023	,311
		Persistence	25	31,20	6,409		
	Negative Self-Image	Post-test	25	30,84	5,595	,962	,341
		Persistence	25	29,40	4,966		
	Somatization	Post-test	25	22,16	4,633	,992	,326
		Persistence	25	20,96	3,888		
	Hostility	Post-test	25	19,92	3,534	1,132	,263
		Persistence	25	18,76	3,711		
	Existence	Post-test	25	74,84	6,529	-2,271	,028
		Persistence	25	78,36	4,172		
	Belonging	Post-test	25	32,84	3,578	-1,910	,062
		Persistence	25	34,64	3,067		
	Finding Meaning	Post-test	25	67,08	4,645	-1,596	,117
		Persistence	25	69,00	3,818		
	Surpassing Yourself	Post-test	25	47,56	3,453	,214	,831
		Persistence	25	47,36	3,147		
	Spirituality Scale	Post-test	25	226,56	13,329	1,741	,098
		Persistence	25	221,00	9,878		

The comparison of the participants' post-test and follow-up test scores on the sub-dimensions of the Brief Symptom Inventory—anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility—regarding the spiritual care and empowerment program supported by value-based folk songs is presented in Table 4. The statistical analyses showed that there was no significant difference between the post-test and follow-up measurements ($p > .05$).

When the total scores of the Spirituality Scale were examined, no statistically significant difference was found between the post-test and the follow-up test conducted three months later ($p > .05$). Similarly, in the sub-dimensions of the Spirituality Scale—belonging, finding meaning, and self-transcendence—no significant change was observed between the post-test and follow-up test scores ($p > .05$). However, it was determined that the follow-up test scores in the *being* sub-dimension significantly increased compared to the post-test scores ($p < .05$).

**Figure 1.** Psychological Health Indicators of the Experimental Group (Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores)

The graph presents the distribution of students' pre-test and post-test psychological health indicators and spirituality scores. The analyses revealed that post-test scores for anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility significantly decreased compared to the pre-test, while spiritual well-being scores significantly increased ($p < .05$).

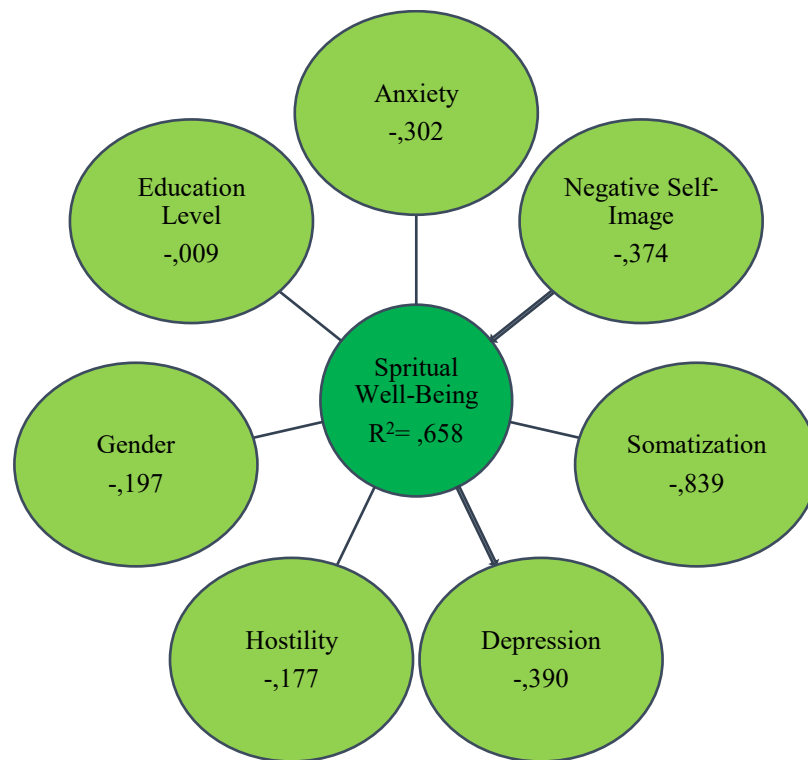


Figure 2. Predictive Effects of Participants' Psychological Health Indicators, Gender, and Grade Level on Spiritual Well-Being

The regression analysis examined the relationships between the students' post-test anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility scores and the demographic variables (gender and grade level). As a result of the analysis, it was determined that these psychological indicators and demographic factors significantly predicted spiritual well-being levels. According to the findings, the spiritual well-being scores of female students were higher than those of male students, and as the grade level increased, spiritual well-being scores showed a slight tendency to decrease. The figure results show that the established model is significant and that the independent variables explain approximately 66% of the total variance in the dependent variable ($F = 4.669$; $p = .004$; $R^2 = .658$).

DISCUSSION

The study examined the effects of the spiritual care and empowerment practice supported by value-based folk songs on participants' levels of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, hostility, and spiritual well-being. The findings revealed significant decreases in anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility levels among participants who took part in the program, while their spiritual well-being levels increased. These findings indicate that the program had a healing effect on both the psychological and spiritual dimensions of young adults. The results are consistent with the literature suggesting that spirituality strengthens psychological resilience (Koenig, 2021; Pargament, 2011). The findings also show that music-based spiritual interventions not only provide emotional relief but also reconstruct one's sense of meaning, connection, and control. These three dimensions, articulated in Pargament's (1997) "spiritual coping" model, were experienced in this study through the medium of music and lyrics. The results largely support the research hypotheses. In particular, the confirmation of hypotheses H1, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7 demonstrates the overall effectiveness of the program. The partial significance of hypothesis H2, which relates to depression, suggests that longer-term interventions may be required to achieve more pronounced effects on depressive symptoms.

These results align with numerous studies indicating that music-based spiritual care enhances individuals' psychological resilience. For instance, Tosun and Özdoğan (2024) reported that spiritual care practices for veterans led to significant reductions in anxiety, depression, and negative self-concept levels. Similarly, Prick et al. (2024) found that music therapy reduced neuropsychiatric symptoms and improved quality of life among nursing home residents with dementia. As in those studies, the present research observed strengthened processes of emotion regulation, awareness, and meaning-making through music. Mojahed et al. (2021) found that music therapy reduced aggression and social anxiety in children, while Zhang et al. (2024) showed that music-based interventions lowered stress and anxiety among caregivers of cancer patients. Gutiérrez et al. (2024) also demonstrated that music therapy

reduced depressive symptoms in women with major depressive disorder. These parallels highlight the consistency of the present study's results with the broader evidence that music-based interventions can alleviate psychological symptoms. Jin (2022) reported that music therapy combined with meditation improved students' mental health, and Gutiérrez et al. (2015) found that music therapy significantly reduced anxiety in individuals with generalized anxiety disorder. Punkanen (2011) emphasized that improvisational music therapy strengthens emotional expression and inner balance in individuals with depression. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that therapeutic settings integrating music and spirituality are powerful tools for supporting psychological well-being.

The study determined that the program increased participants' levels of spiritual well-being and that this effect persisted in the follow-up test. This finding suggests that spiritual interventions can produce not only short-term but also lasting effects. The role of spirituality in individuals' lives has been defined in the literature as "finding meaning, developing hope, and establishing a connection with God" (Koenig, 2021; Pargament, 2011). Within this framework, the folk songs used in the intervention served not merely as artistic expressions but as integral components of a spiritual meaning-making process.

Yıldırım (2021) noted that music therapy practices enhance spirituality and facilitate coping with psychological problems. Can and Yılmaz (2019) revealed that music therapy strengthens the relationship between emotional balance and spirituality in recent research, while Moss (2019) showed that music therapy increases life satisfaction by positively influencing spirituality. Similarly, in this study, spiritually oriented practices supported by music enhanced individuals' sense of meaning in life and inner peace. Karşlı (2019) emphasized the close relationship among identity perception, faith, and spirituality in music therapy, while Cook and Silverman (2013) found that music therapy among oncology patients strengthened their sense of closeness to God. Włodarczyk (2007) also emphasized that spirituality serves as a source of psychological support for both patients and their relatives. These findings support the observation in this study that values such as "trust in the Creator, patience, and gratitude" are intertwined with psychological relief.

Huda et al. (2023) highlighted the positive effects of music therapy on spiritual well-being, quality of life, and psychological distress, while Rababa and Al-Sabbah (2023) reported that spirituality-based music therapy promotes spiritual empowerment and psychological healing. Seitz et al. (2012) found that music therapy reduced anxiety in critically ill patients; Arnau (2013) and Marcos Treceño et al. (2024) showed that music-based educational practices improved students' social adaptation and goal-achievement skills. These findings confirm the results of the present study within the context of international literature. Gökalp et al. (2023) reported that music therapy reduced anxiety and depression among COVID-19 patients. Similarly, in this study, the intervention was found to decrease stress and anxiety levels and improve overall psychological well-being. Correlation analyses revealed negative relationships between spirituality and the variables of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility. This result supports hypothesis H7.

These findings demonstrate that the relationship between spiritual care and psychological awareness emphasized in the studies of Saunders et al. (2010) and Gonçalves et al. (2015) also holds true in the local context. Furthermore, studies by Nuraeni et al. (2024), Masjedi-Arani et al. (2020), and Yunitasari et al. (2020) have reported significant ameliorative effects of spiritual care and hope therapy on depression and stress. Similarly, Ghorbani et al. (2021), Tutzer et al. (2024), and Sigurvinsdottir et al. (2021) found that spirituality was negatively correlated with psychological health indicators—that is, as spiritual orientation increased, stress, anxiety, and depression decreased. Therefore, this study provides experimental support that transferring spiritual interventions onto a cultural ground through music can effectively enhance psychological health. This result emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural elements into therapeutic processes within the field of spiritual psychology and demonstrates that music serves as a universal language that strengthens the individual's spiritual connection with their inner world.

These results reveal not only the effectiveness of music therapy but also the applicability of spirituality-based group processes among university youth. The program contributed to improvements in individuals' psychological health indicators and increases in their levels of spiritual well-being. These findings indicate that spirituality- and culture-based psychosocial interventions can serve as effective support mechanisms for young adults.

Beyond its psychological implications, this study underscores the cultural significance of traditional Turkish folk songs as vehicles for transmitting values, fostering social cohesion, and promoting spiritual resilience. By integrating music, spirituality, and cultural heritage within an experimental framework, the research demonstrates how culturally rooted practices can serve as effective psychosocial interventions. This culturally grounded approach not only enriches the field of spiritual psychology but also contributes to cross-cultural perspectives in understanding how collective meaning-making processes support mental and spiritual well-being. In this sense, the study bridges local cultural wisdom with contemporary scientific inquiry, offering a model for culturally sensitive and spiritually informed care practices.

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In conclusion, the data obtained from this research show that the spiritual care and empowerment practice supported by value-based folk songs is an effective example of a cultural-psychological intervention that positively influences individuals' psychological health indicators and strengthens their spiritual well-being. In this respect, the study contributes culturally to the literature on music therapy and spiritual care approaches.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the effects of the spiritual care and empowerment practice supported by value-based folk songs on participants' levels of anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, hostility, and spiritual well-being. The findings revealed that the intervention contributed to a decrease in psychological problems and an increase in spiritual well-being. In addition, a negative relationship was found between the sub-dimensions of the Brief Symptom Inventory and spiritual well-being. As a result, it can be stated that as anxiety, depression, negative self-concept, somatization, and hostility decreased among participants, their levels of spiritual well-being increased. This indicates that the intervention can serve as a supportive approach to promote individuals' psychological health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Such interventions can be used as supportive methods for individuals experiencing similar psychological difficulties.
2. The program can be applied not only for reducing psychological problems but also for promoting spiritual development.
3. The application was conducted only with students from the Faculty of Theology, which is a limitation; therefore, similar studies should be carried out with different faculties and age groups.
4. Since the study used value-based folk songs, future research could comparatively examine different types of music to determine which ones have a greater impact on psychological health and spiritual well-being.
5. Only a short-term program was implemented; long-term studies could provide more detailed insights into the persistence of the effects.

This research is one of the pioneering experimental studies testing the effects of the spiritual care and empowerment program supported by value-based folk songs on the psychological health and spirituality of university students. The study reveals the potential of both music-based interventions and spiritual care approaches to support the psychological well-being of young adults. Moreover, by presenting original findings regarding the use of folk songs—a cultural element—in psychosocial interventions, the research provides a theoretical and practical foundation for future studies in this field.

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