

# Optimal Spirituality Counseling Approach: Integration of Ritual, Theistic and Existential Values in Counseling Practices in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Spirituality counseling has developed as a significant approach to supporting the mental health and well-being of individuals, especially in Indonesia, which has rich religious and cultural diversity. This research aims to develop and test a framework for an optimal spirituality counseling approach appropriate to the Indonesian context, focusing on integrating three main dimensions of spirituality: ritual, theistic, and existential. Data was collected using a quantitative survey method, the Daily Spirituality Preference Questionnaire (PSS), adapted to Indonesian society's cultural and religious conditions. The research results show that a balanced and integrated spirituality can positively impact solving problems and improving individual well-being. This study offers a solid theoretical framework and practical implications for counselors in implementing adaptive and holistic spirituality counseling. Recommendations for counseling practice in Indonesia include the importance of adapting interventions to the client's spiritual and cultural background and developing counselor competence in dealing with spiritual issues.

**Keywords:** Spirituality counseling; optimal spirituality; ritual; theistic; existential; Indonesia

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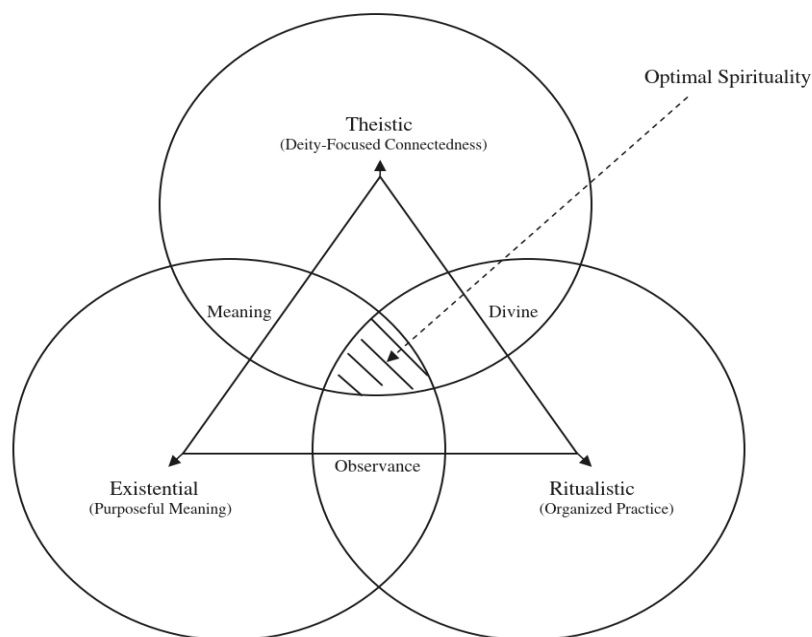
## INTRODUCTION

Globalization has indeed facilitated easier access to learning and knowledge exchange, especially in the fields of science and technology. Rapid advances, such as artificial intelligence (AI), have made learning more accessible (Macháček, 2023). However, there are concerns about the potential negative impact of these developments on national identity and values. Ease of exposure to diverse cultures and behaviors through technology can pose a threat to the integrity of a nation's noble values, potentially causing conflict with local norms and beliefs (Lupu & Tiganasu, 2022; Odeny & Bosurgi, 2022). This highlights the importance of balancing the benefits of globalization with preserving cultural identity and values to prevent the erosion of national integrity and noble principles.

The development of science has indeed advanced, discussions of human psychology have gone beyond transcendent experiences, especially in psychology and counseling, where transpersonal psychology and the study of spirituality are increasingly prominent (Ferdiansyah & Noverina, 2019; Ge & Yang, 2023). Spirituality involves exploring beyond the constraints of the ego, leading to increased awareness and a more reflective mindset (Gorelik, 2016). In Islam, thinking goes beyond worldly desires to considerations about the afterlife, including rewards and sins (Johnstone & Cohen, 2019). Modern individuals seek inner peace through spiritual practices that align with their beliefs, such as Muslims actively engaging in religious activities to find tranquility (Luckmann, 2014). This search for inner peace reflects society's thirst for spiritual fulfillment amidst scientific progress.

Indonesia is indeed a country with a diverse religious landscape, where the state's foundation, Pancasila, emphasizes belief in One God (Silitonga et al., 2023). The majority of Indonesians adhere to Islam, followed by Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism. These six religions are recognized religions in Indonesia (Fazrin et al., 2023). The complexity of religious history in Indonesia is influenced by factors such as cultural, structural and economic aspects (Febriani et al., 2023). Despite the potential for optimal spirituality in Indonesia, there are challenges that hinder its development, as evidenced by issues such as intolerance, hate speech, and corruption (Pane, 2023). To overcome the imbalance in optimal spirituality experiences, efforts are needed to promote attitudes of tolerance, combat social issues, and increase the understanding and practice of spirituality among Indonesians.

Optimal spirituality is built on opinion Webb et al (2013) that optimal spirituality is a balance between the three dimensions of spirituality. The spirituality dimension consists of ritual spirituality, theistic spirituality and existential spirituality. Here's the picture:



Furthermore, the concept of this web was adapted to the culture of Indonesian society, which is actually religious (Novitasari: 2023). So these three dimensions of spirituality are closely related to a person's supposed religious experience. Where ritual spirituality is the implementation and experience of interpreting the practice of religious ritual worship, theistic spirituality is the belief in the existence and power of God, and existential spirituality is the willingness to understand oneself, the nature and purpose of life as well as being kind to other people and nature. If these three dimensions can be implemented, Indonesia can certainly become a strong and progressive country. Because this optimal spirituality not only improves the quality of routine worship, but also includes professionalism in work and harmonious relationships with other people and raises many more potentials. Therefore, optimal spirituality is the state of a person who has an equal balance of the three dimensions of spirituality (Novitasari: 2023). Moreover, optimal spirituality is closely related to religious experience, so the concept of optimal spirituality can accommodate complete religious values according to its teachings. Thus, the concept of optimal spirituality can be used as a direction for guidance within the framework

of a counseling approach. Based on this, the aim of this research is to describe the framework for an optimal spirituality counseling approach in Indonesian society.

## METHOD

### Design

This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey design to describe the framework for an optimal spirituality counseling approach in Indonesian society. Data was collected through the Daily Spirituality Preference Questionnaire (PSS) questionnaire, which has been adapted to the cultural and religious context of Indonesian society. This questionnaire measures three dimensions of spirituality, namely ritual, theistic and existential spirituality.

### Research Instrument

The main instrument in this research is the PSS questionnaire which consists of several items designed to measure respondents' daily spiritual preferences. Each dimension of spirituality has a number of specific items, for example ritual spirituality measures the frequency and meaning of religious-ritual worship practices, theistic spirituality measures belief in the existence and power of God, and existential spirituality assesses self-understanding of the nature of life and relationships with other people and nature.

### Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out in several stages. First, questionnaires were distributed to randomly selected respondents using purposive sampling techniques, with a focus on populations that have diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Second, respondents were given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire to ensure a good understanding of each item being measured. Respondents filled out the questionnaire online.

### Data analysis

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis is used to describe the frequency distribution and mean of each dimension of spirituality measured. As a complement to quantitative data, this research also integrates a literature review regarding spirituality in Indonesia. The literature used includes relevant previous research and has been published in leading scientific journals. This review provides a theoretical framework that supports and enriches the interpretation of data obtained from the questionnaire.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Spirituality Counseling: A Conceptual Overview

Spirituality counseling was born from the experience of counselors who apparently were unable to leave the counselee's spiritual experience, in fact spirituality experiences were actually able to provide psychological health for the counselee. Apart from that, spirituality counseling was also born at the same time as the rise of studies on transpersonal psychology. So the experience of spirituality is included in this transpersonal psychology study (Shorrock, 2007). Spirituality is an effort to pay attention to the meaning and purpose of life in the context of a relationship with the universe and the highest power we believe in (George et al., 2000; WR Miller & Thoresen, 1999; Sperry & Giblin, 1996; Steiner, 1991). Thus, the experience of spirituality can encourage extraordinary thoughts and feelings about the meaning of life. Ultimately, humans will always remember the purpose of their life, then this will have an impact on their behavior patterns and attitudes in interpreting spirituality in accordance with the beliefs they hold. For example, Islam teaches that the purpose of life is to worship Allah. So every Muslim should interpret all his activities with the intention of worshiping Allah.

The concept of spiritual counseling is to invite the client to be able to interpret the problem so that it can help him make decisions to solve the problem. As per opinion Forman (2002) that the use of spirituality in psychotherapy means involving the client's spiritual experiences in psychotherapy to help him overcome problems, such as stress, trauma, loss, helps reduce alcohol addiction and supports mental health. Overall, this spiritual experience is very valuable, not only for psychological healing, but also physical, character development, and a good relationship with God and the universe. According to G. Miller (2003) There are several things that need to be considered in implementing spirituality experiences in counseling, including:

- a) The counselor must tell the client that the approach approved at that time is a spiritual approach
- b) The counselor must assess the client's background and current spiritual status before using spiritual approaches
- c) Counselors must build a relationship of trust with clients before using spiritual approaches

- d) Counselors should carefully consider whether a spiritual approach is indicated (needed) before deciding to use it
- e) Counselors must have a clear picture of the spiritual approach they wish to use and obtain permission from the client before implementing the approach.
- f) Counselors must use spiritual interventions respectfully, remembering that many of them are considered sacred and sacred practices by their adherents.
- g) Counselors must work within the framework of their clients' values and be careful not to compromise the counselor's own spiritual beliefs and the client's values, although counselors must challenge and help clients examine beliefs that are clearly irrational.
- h) Counselors should not apply spiritual interventions rigidly or uniformly to all clients but use them flexibly
- i) Counselors must continue to develop spiritually to guide themselves.

Therefore, counselors need to carry out spirituality counseling carefully according to the values used. Lines (2006) mentions several spiritual and religious techniques in psychotherapy or counseling, including: (a) Techniques in religious psychotherapy (prayer, reading holy books, repentance); (b) Techniques in transpersonal psychotherapy (mindfulness meditation); (c) Treating physical symptoms holistically; (d) Somatic techniques: chakras; (e) Religious and transpersonal techniques; (f) Mystical relationships, and (g) Connectedness with spiritual experiences (Connectedness). Meanwhile, Yusuf (2009) mentions several theistic spirituality counseling techniques including: Counselor prayer, providing information about spiritual concepts, referring to holy books, spiritual self-disclosure, spiritual confrontation, spiritual assessment, joint prayer between the counselor and the counselee, encouragement to forgive, use of community or religious groups, and client prayer. These are the techniques that can be used in spirituality counseling.

Apart from technique, spirituality counselors also need to have spiritual competence. G Miller, (2003) in his book states that there are 9 spiritual competencies for counselors, including being able to: 1) Explain the differences and relationships between religious, spiritual and transpersonal phenomena, including their similarities; 2) Describe religious, spiritual and transpersonal beliefs and practice from a diversity perspective; 3) Conduct self-exploration regarding religious, spiritual and/or transpersonal beliefs to foster self-understanding and acceptance of one's belief system; 4) Describe a system of religious, spiritual and transpersonal beliefs; 5) Explain one or two models of human religious, spiritual and transpersonal development throughout life; 6) Demonstrate empathy and understanding of various religious, spiritual, and transpersonal communications; 7) Identify a person's tolerance limit for religious, spiritual and/or transpersonal phenomena; in cases of intolerance, demonstrate the ability to make appropriate referrals and generate possible referral sources; 8) Pay attention to accessing the relevance of religious, spiritual and/or transpersonal domains in the client's therapeutic issues, and 9) Able to accept, provoke and/or avoid religious, spiritual and transpersonal material in the counseling process as appropriate to the client's expressed preferences, if may be relevant for counseling.

Meanwhile, Yusuf (2009) states that there are several roles of theistic spiritual counselors, including:

1. Adopt an ecumenical attitude, namely an attitude and approach that is appropriate to the client's religious background. Therefore, counselors need to have the role of: (a) realizing that religious values or spirituality have an impact on service performance for clients with different beliefs. (b) able to communicate and be respectful with clients of different beliefs. (c) understand that spiritual beliefs can influence clinical judgment. (d) sensitive to the client's religious condition which may require referral to an appropriate therapist. (e) understand the client's religious beliefs and habits. (f) understand the client's unique spiritual views. (g) understand ways to overcome conflicting values or beliefs that occur during counseling. (h) building relationships of mutual respect. (i) understand the sources of the counselee's spirituality, and encourage the counselee to use this potential in overcoming problems, developing personal health, and changing attitudes or behavior. (j) carry out spiritual intervention in accordance with the client's spiritual beliefs in solving problems.
2. Adopting "Denominational Therapeutic" is a counseling approach that is adapted to the client's beliefs as a member of a particular religious group. This is necessary so that the counselor can share with the counselee, so that a deeper understanding is obtained.
3. Building a therapeutic relationship through several helpful conditions, such as; creating rapport, trust, empathy, warmth, respect, acceptance and credibility.
4. Communicate moral or ethical values.
5. Creating a spiritual space for therapy/counseling.

This is a description of the spirituality counseling approach according to experts. Regarding the implementation of spirituality counseling, an adaptation process is required first in accordance with the noble values of the Indonesian nation.

### Optimal Spirituality Counseling Concept

Indonesia has its own basic foundation in state life where Indonesian people have the right and obligation to practice religion according to their respective religious beliefs. Apart from that, it is based on the beliefs and culture of the majority of Indonesian people who are religious. So the implementation of spirituality counseling for Indonesian people needs to be related to their religious experience. Therefore, the counseling concept this time has a guidance focus that leads to optimal spiritual conditions. Optimal spirituality is a condition that is balanced and equally good between ritual, theistic and existential spirituality. Thus, it can be defined as spiritual counseling as a counseling approach to help clients solve their problems by utilizing the client's spiritual potential and being guided towards optimal spiritual development (Novitasari: 2023). The stages of spirituality counseling are as follows:

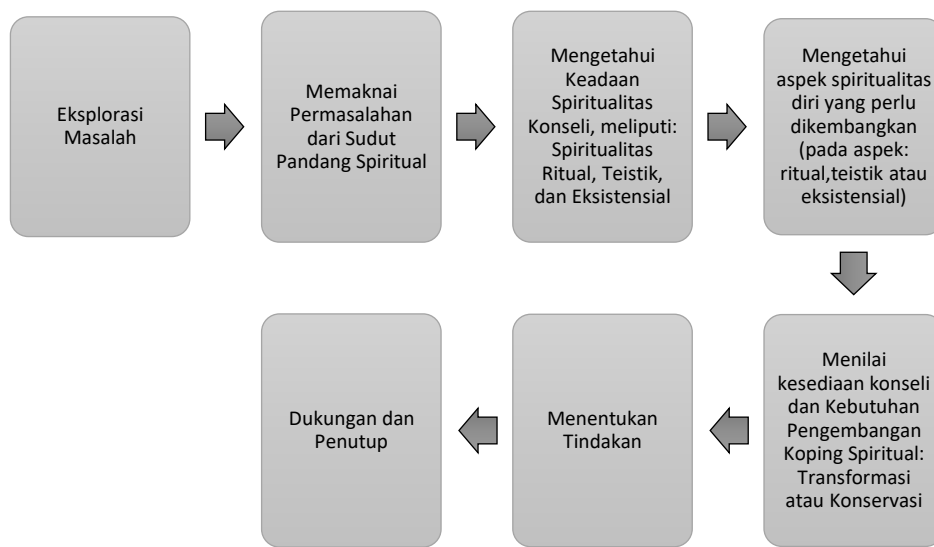


Figure 2. Stages of counseling with a spirituality approach

In the picture you can see there are 7 stages. Stage 1 exploration is the stage where the counselor helps the client reveal the problem and find the root of the problem. Stage 2 interprets the problem from a spiritual perspective, here the client is guided to try to see the problem from the client's spiritual perspective. With this, the client can think more broadly in looking at the problem. Stage 3 is knowing the condition of the counselee's spirituality, here the counselor and counselee try to see what efforts have been made by the counselee which includes ritual, theistic and existential spirituality. When the state of spirituality is known, then proceed to stage 4, namely knowing what is lacking from these 3 aspects of spirituality. Is it lacking in ritual, theistic, or existential.

In stage 4, the client realizes what aspects of spirituality need to be developed, especially to address or resolve their problems. After the counselee knows about the state of their spirituality, then they enter stage 5, namely seeing the counselee's willingness to develop their spirituality so that it is better and more balanced between the three aspects of spirituality. In this process the counselor can see the client's spiritual coping needs, whether they require the development of conservation or transformation coping. Conservation coping is a person's way of dealing with problems or stress by using value strategies that have been used previously (G. Miller, 2003). Meanwhile, transformational coping is a person's way of dealing with problems or stress by looking for better solutions and changing the value perspective on the problem (G. Miller, 2003). By looking at the state of spiritual coping, the counselor can provide a form of guidance. The next 5th stage is for the counselor to use spiritual counseling techniques for the counselee. Stage 6 is support and cover. Here the counselor can provide words or actions to support the counselee in facing this problem and as a closing the counselor can also pray or invite the counselee to pray together regarding solving the tonseli problem.

The techniques that can be provided through a spirituality counseling approach include: spirituality-religious bibliography, reviewing holy books and hadith, dhikr (remembering Allah), prayer, self-disclosure of spirituality, confrontation of spirituality, reflection, meditation, visualization, assessment of spirituality, provision of information about the concept of spirituality, the encouragement of spirituality, the use of religious communities or groups, necessary doctrines, and worship rituals. In carrying out these stages and techniques,

counselors need to have certain competencies as spirituality counselors. The following is an illustration of the counselor's spiritual competence:

Competency Aspects	Description
<b>Comprehension Competency</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Counselors can consider, involve, and prioritize religious values;</li> <li>2. The counselor realizes that spiritual needs need to be renewed over time;</li> <li>3. The counselor recognizes the client's living environment and life which has influenced the color of his spirituality;</li> <li>4. The counselor understands that his spiritual and religious beliefs can influence his judgment towards his counselee;</li> <li>5. Counselors realize that their religious or spiritual values can influence their performance in serving clients with different spiritual values;</li> <li>6. The counselor understands the sources of the client's spirituality and encourages the client to apply them in an effort to overcome problems, make themselves mentally healthy and develop themselves.</li> </ol>
<b>Attitude Competency</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Counselors have the assumption that humans are unique;</li> <li>2. The counselor is open to sacred things;</li> <li>3. The counselor has sensitivity or sensitivity to the spiritual experience of the client;</li> <li>4. Counselors are willing to continue to hone and develop their spirituality.</li> </ol>
<b>Skills Competency</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The counselor is able to communicate (especially in efforts to explore, provoke, limit) in counseling that is appropriate and relevant to the client's choices;</li> <li>2. Counselors are able to build helpful therapeutic relationships such as: creating rapport, trust, empathy, warmth, respect, reflection and credibility;</li> <li>3. The counselor is able to determine and carry out spiritual and religious treatments that are appropriate to the counselee's condition;</li> <li>4. The counselor is able to explore the client's spiritual-religious experience;</li> <li>5. The counselor understands ways to overcome conflicting values or beliefs that occur during counseling;</li> <li>6. The counselor is able to communicate and be respectful of clients who have different spiritual values;</li> <li>7. The counselor is able to encourage sharing with the counselee about spiritual experiences so that the counselee is facilitated in overcoming problems;</li> <li>8. Counselors are able to set tolerance limits in using a spirituality approach in counseling.</li> </ol>

As with other services in guidance and counseling, accountability needs to be carried out in the form of assessments. In the context of spiritual counseling, accountability is called success criteria or reflection. Reflection includes results and processes. Reflection on the results is carried out to determine the success of counseling felt by the counselee. Meanwhile, process reflection is carried out to determine the success of each spirituality counseling process carried out by the counselor for the counselee.

## CONCLUSION

Spirituality counseling for Indonesian people must be related to their religiosity. In this way, spirituality counseling has the potential to strengthen the client's religious experience. The spirituality development carried out is adjusted to the client's religious beliefs. If you experience differences in beliefs between the counselor and the counselee, the counselor can provide a general discourse on spirituality and refer it to a religious figure who matches the counselee's beliefs. This spirituality counseling carries the direction of guidance towards optimal spirituality. Optimal spirituality is a state of balance and equal excellence in ritual, theistic and existential spiritual aspects. When referring to Islamic values, this concept of optimal spirituality has the potential to accommodate religious teachings as a whole. Both in terms of ritual worship, professionalism, and good relationships with other people and nature. Where in this case, everything is done based on spiritual awareness

(intention of worship because of Allah). This optimal spirituality counseling approach aims to achieve overall and correct religious values. As Islam also teaches to be religious as a whole (Kaffah). Because worship cannot be viewed narrowly, not only rituals but service work and good relationships with other people are also seen as worship. Therefore, there are several recommendations that can be made, namely (1) for guidance and counseling teachers who wish to hone their spirituality and also do good deeds through guidance to their counselees, (2) this concept of optimal spirituality counseling can contribute to da'wah, so that it can be used by ustadz in developing a broader meaning of da'wah, (3) for society in general who wants to strengthen religious-spiritual experiences.

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