



Research Article

Family Counseling With The Spiritually-Directed Satir Model: A Case Report

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Abstract

The number of studies conducted on the family, which has great importance in the life of the individual and society, is increasing. The need for studies on the establishment, continuity, and protection of the family has increased with the rapid change in family structure and the increasing divorce rates in recent years. Family therapy helps family members to deal with and solve their problems with a holistic perspective. The present study aimed to uncover the effectiveness of Spiritually-directed Family Counseling in complex family problems. Developed by Kılınçer, the "Family Therapy Model Using Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy with the Focus on Spiritual Practices of Islam" is a semi-structured model created by integrating the spiritual-religious sources in Islam with Satir transformational systemic therapy. The study was conducted in 11 sessions with a nuclear family with one child who applied with complex problems such as infidelity, bipolar disorder, cancer, childhood traumas, relationship problems, porn addiction, violence, and suicide attempt. As a result of the therapy, it was found that spirituality-directed family counseling can lead to changes in the family at the first level (less fighting, less anger, calmness, etc.) and at the second level (for the couple to forgive and understand each other internally, opening up more space for each other's feelings, expectations and longings, etc.).

Keywords:

Family Counseling/Therapy • Family • Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy • Spirituality • Case Report

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E-mail: hkilincer@bingol.edu.tr

eISSN: 2458-9675

Received: 14.02.2023

Revision: 25.02.2023

Accepted: 31.02.2023

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Citation: Kılınçer, H. (2023). Family counseling with the spiritually-directed Satir model: A case report. *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling*, 8(2), 109–131. <http://doi.org/10.37898/spc.2023.8.2.188>

Introduction

The changes that emerged with modernization caused the family structure to change, as in many other fields. Marriage preferences, types and ages of individuals marrying, sharing of roles and responsibilities in the family, and child-rearing styles also changed in this respect. Today, the extended family structure has turned into a nuclear family structure, the patriarchal system has been transformed into an egalitarian one, and the number of single-parent families has increased (Aybey, 2015, s. 152; Can, 2023, s. 85; Özbay, 2015, s. 32). (Aybey, 2015, s. 152; Can, 2023, s. 85; Özbay, 2015, s. 32). One of the important changes has been the increase in divorce rates worldwide despite the decrease in marriage rates. Today, couples experience conflicts regarding many issues such as child care, economic problems, communication problems, sharing of roles and responsibilities, root family problems, addiction, power conflict, infidelity, violence, not meeting expectations from marriage, religion, sect, differences in political views, and adjustment problems. Unsolved problems cause divorces (Canel, 2012, s. 201; Ferah, 2019, s. 52; Hawkins, Willoughby, & Doherty, 2012, s. 462; Lowenstein, 2005, s. 155).

Families need support when faced with problems. Family counseling/therapy practices that emerged as a natural result of this search date back to the 1940s. Especially after World War II, the need for support of families became obvious, and this accelerated the emergence of family counseling. Family therapy is a psychological help service that provides a correct communication setting among family members, helps them to cope with the problems they face and gain insight, finds the source of conflicts and problems, and involves all family members (Bulut Ateş, 2019, s. 3; Nazlı, 2016, ss. 2-3). In our present day, it is possible to talk about many family therapy schools such as psycho-dynamic family therapy, structural family therapy, strategic family therapy, cognitive behavioral family therapy, solution-oriented family therapy, and experiential family therapy.

Religious families often resort to solutions offered by their religion -before family counseling- when faced with problems. The fact that religion was influential in the decisions made by religious individuals regarding marriage and family life and that families sought the solution in the teachings offered by religion attracted attention in the 90s, and discussions began on how to deal with spirituality in family counseling. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of studies conducted on this subject since the 2000s. It is possible to say that the discussions on integrating spirituality into family counseling have decreased in our present day, and there has been a great deal of consensus on this issue. The contents of the studies focused on how to integrate spirituality into family counseling/therapy (Helmeke & Bischof, 2007, s. 170; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990, s. 990).

Although there has been an increased number of studies on integrating the spirituality dimension into family counseling in the West, this is a new issue in Turkey. In this context, the present study aimed to discuss and evaluate the effect of the *Family therapy model using Satir Transformational Systemic therapy with a focus on the Spiritual practices of Islam*, which was developed by Kılınçer (2021) on complex family problems through a case study. In this context, firstly, the model was introduced in general terms, and then its effectiveness in complex cases was evaluated through a case presentation. Although there are some differences between family counseling and family therapy, family counseling is generally used instead of family therapy in the literature. Family counseling and family therapy were used interchangeably throughout the study. Also, the *Family therapy model using Satir Transformational Systemic therapy with a focus on the Spiritual practices of Islam* was used shortly as *Spiritually-directed Family Therapy/Counseling*, and the Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy was used as *Satir Family Therapy Model* (i.e., the Satir Model).

1. Spiritually-directed family therapy

The *Spiritually-directed Family Therapy Model* that was used in the study was developed by Kılınçer (2021). Kılınçer, who developed the model by integrating the spiritual resources in Islam into Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy, showed the effectiveness of the model with an experimental study. In the study, in which pre-test, post-test, and follow-up tests were used, statistically significant and positive changes were detected in the marital satisfaction, problem-solving skills, and family environment of the couples who received spiritually-directed family therapy. Also, in the interviews with the experimental group at the end of the study, the pair said that including the spirituality dimension in family therapy positively changed their individual lives and family relationships (Kılınçer, 2021).

The theoretical background of the Spiritually-Directed Family Therapy Model is based on Satir Transformational Systemic Family Therapy. Satir Transformational Systemic Family Therapy, which was put forward by Virginia Satir, who was one of the representatives of the experiential family counseling school, has an existential, humanistic, systemic, and holistic structure. Virginia Satir presented a developmental model away from pathology at a time when pathology-oriented approaches were common. The Satir Transformational Systemic Family Therapy is based on five basic elements, *being positively oriented, being experiential, using the therapist's self, being change-oriented, and systemic*. Believing that positive change is always possible in the individual and interpersonal system, Satir brought a unique and dynamic perspective to family therapy. The meta/universal targets in Satir Transformational Systemic Family Therapy are positively oriented and attainable. The ultimate target in therapy is to ensure that individuals are in harmony and congruence (Banmen & Maki-Banmen, 2014, s. 117; Haber, 2002, s. 28; Mook, 1997, s. 181; Pei, 2000, s. 71; Smith, 2002, s. 127).

It is possible to mention many original concepts and techniques that Satir brought to the literature. *Coping stances* are among these. Satir said that individuals use four types of coping stances to survive under stress (blamer, super reasonable, placater, and irrelevant coping stances). Coping stances, which are mostly learned during childhood to receive acceptance and love from the family, begin to emerge as a reflex in the moments that are considered to have no solution. Individuals may exhibit different coping stances depending on the relationship and situation they face (Banmen, 2002, s. 18; Lee, 2001, s. 44; Pei, 2000, s. 67).

Family reconstruction is one of the other effective methods Satir used. Family reconstruction provides individuals with the opportunity to look at and interpret past events with fresh eyes; how an individual looks at events in childhood and how s/he interprets himself/herself and events affect his/her perspectives on the future (Lee, 2001, s. 158; Taylor, 2002, s. 130). The family map is another technique used in Satir Transformational Systemic Family Therapy. The family map is a visual representation to help the individual to understand how his/her childhood life affects his/her present-day by entering his/her inner world and introducing each family member to certain attributes. The names of the parents, siblings, their date and place of birth, date of marriage, current age or date of death, religious beliefs, occupation, educational status, ethnicity, illness, disability, or divorce, if any, are included in the family map. Individuals include three positive and three negative characteristics about each family member on the family map (Banmen, 2002, ss. 14-17; Pei, 2000, s. 69).

The Iceberg Metaphor is one of the effective methods that Satir brought to family therapy. Satir used the Iceberg Metaphor to depict the multidimensional inner psychic system that humans had. Behaviors are on the visible, floating face of this iceberg, and there are feelings, feelings about feelings, perceptions, expectations, yearnings, and self, respectively, in the invisible and underwater parts. Satir depicted the layers of the iceberg in three dimensions the *Interpersonal Dimension* (behavior), the *Intra-psychic Dimension* (feelings, feelings about feelings, perceptions, and expectations), and the *Universal Spiritual Dimension* (Yearnings and Self). These dimensions that exist in human beings are in a relationship with each other and affect each other. In other words, the internal dimension of interpersonal communication interchangeably affects interpersonal communication in the internal dimension (Lee, 2001, s. 100; Tam, 2006, s. 248).

Satir was the first to openly mention the *spirituality* concept in family therapy and to include spirituality in her works. Satir defined the *spirituality* concept as the connection with the deepest self and emphasized that every individual should experience spirituality beyond religious and ideological understanding. Satir, who had a holistic, multidimensional, and systematic understanding at the point of understanding humans, clearly included the “*spirituality*” concept in her works.

Satir, who emphasized the existence of the *spirituality* concept while explaining the structure of the human being, accepted the universal spirituality dimension as one of the focal points of the therapy. Satir has an important place in expressing these thoughts at a time when spirituality is not spoken about in family therapy. It is possible to see spirituality clearly in both the philosophical dimension and the implementation part of Satir's Transformational Systemic Family Therapy (Innes, 2002, s. 49; Leslie, 2016, s. 17; Satir, 2016, s. 369).

Kılınçer integrated the sources in Islam into Satir's Transformational Systemic Therapy within the framework of the model he developed. Trust, loyalty, love, closeness, privacy, forgiveness, appreciation, good words-joking, and gentleness-soft behaviors in Islam are the sources used in the model. Thanksgiving agenda and prayer tie application were given to the couple as homework in each session. Detection and solution of problems arising from religious misperceptions and wrong or incomplete religious knowledge were also included in the spiritual dimension of therapies. In summary, the Family therapy model using Satir Transformational Systemic therapy with a focus on the Spiritual practices of Islam (Spiritually-directed Family Therapy) is a semi-structured model introduced by integrating spiritual and religious resources in Islam into Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy.

Spirituality is effective in many areas (e.g., the establishment of the family, its structure, functioning, the view of the families to the solution, the relationship and roles between spouses, marital satisfaction, birth control, pregnancy, violence, infidelity, conflict, and divorce (Kılınçer, 2021, s. 89). This attracted the attention of researchers who worked in the field of family counseling in recent years, and studies were conducted on the inclusion of spirituality in family counseling in three waves. In the West, there was an increase in the number of studies on family, spirituality, and religion between 1980 and 1990. The inclusion of spirituality and religion in family counseling came to the forefront after the 90s. The second wave occurred between 1995-1999 and discussed how to integrate spirituality into family counseling. In the process from the 2000s to the present, it is seen that the discussions on whether or not to integrate spirituality into family counseling have decreased, and a consensus has emerged about the need to integrate spirituality into family counseling. It is also seen that the studies conducted on the transcendence of spirituality and religion in therapy are done in Western countries by focusing on Christian-Jewish beliefs. The first experimental study and model proposal in which spirituality was integrated into family counseling in Turkey was conducted by Kılınçer. The present study aims to present a case report on the use of Kılınçer's model in complex family therapies and to measure the effectiveness of the model. The study was conducted in line with the developed model and considering the systematics of the model.

There are very few case studies in the field of family counseling in Turkey (Civan Gökçaya & Nazlı, 2019; Demirbilek, 2016; Fıfılođlu, 1992; GülçinYıldız, 2020; Türkmen & Erkükçü Akbař, 2021; Üstündađ, 2014). However, no case studies were conducted on how the spirituality dimension can be used in family counseling. The study aimed to exemplify how spirituality-directed family therapy works in complex cases and to show whether it is effective or not. It is considered that it will contribute to the experts who consider working in this field and to the literature.

2. The case

The study first aimed to uncover whether Spirituality Oriented Family Counseling is effective in complex family problems. Another aim was to present a model for the experts who work in the field and researchers who will study similar issues on how to conduct spirituality-directed family counseling (the process, how it is integrated, the methods used, and what kind of path is followed during the session). It is considered that the study, which is the first case report in Turkey in which spirituality is integrated into family counseling and complex family problems are studied, will contribute to the gap in this field.

An announcement was made to determine the family to participate in the study, and the applicant families were informed about the contents of the family counseling model and the process. A couple with complex problems who defined themselves as strong and religious in spirituality and who wanted to receive spirituality-directed family counseling was selected among the families. They declared that they would voluntarily attend all sessions. Information on the double family structure and the reasons for application were given in the relevant part of the study. In the study in which the necessary ethical permissions were obtained, the private information (name, age, city of residence, occupation) that could reveal the identity of the couple was changed.

The sessions were planned as semi-structured sessions, taking into account the needs and demands of the couple. A total of 11 sessions were held, nine of which were family/couple sessions with the family, and three were individual sessions. Notes were taken about the session, and observations were written during and after the sessions. Although the reason for the couple's application was only "cheating by the wife," it was seen in the interviews that they had more complex problems (i.e., Bipolar Disorder, cancer, childhood traumas, relationship problems, porn addiction, violence, suicide attempt, etc.). Although many pathological conditions were detected in this case, the sessions were conducted with a *developmental focus*, not pathology, in line with Virginia Satir's approach.

Prayer ties and gratitude agenda were given as homework assignments at the end of each session. The couples were asked to pray in private every day "for themselves, their spouse, their relationship, and their children" in the prayer tie assignment. The

couples were also asked to fill in an agenda each week that included the headings “*I am grateful for myself, I am grateful for my wife, and I am grateful for my relationship-child.*” Psycho-education was given to the couple when needed, and predetermined books were suggested for them to read.

The iceberg metaphor, coping stances, family map, genogram, metaphors, safe place exercise, and interview techniques were used during the sessions within the framework of Satir Transformative Systemic Family Therapy. Prayer, gratitude, love, closeness, appreciation, loyalty, and trust in Islam were used as a source within the framework of spiritual orientation. The problems stemming from the perceived religious misperceptions were also discussed during the sessions.

Method

The study was conducted with a case analysis design in qualitative research methods, which are widely used in the field of psychology and medicine. The case study is a qualitative method in which the researcher examines the situation in detail with data collection tools (i.e., interviews, observations, audio-visual materials, reports) that includes multiple sources in a limited time and defines the situation and the themes related to the situation and is used in many situations to contribute information about individual, organizational, group, social, political events as a method in which a single situation or event is examined longitudinally, data are collected systematically and interpreted holistically (Aytaçlı, 2012, s. 2; Subaşı & Okumuş, 2017, s. 420; Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2016, s. 289).

The study process and the validity and reliability of the study are important in case studies (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2016, s. 299). In this context, the researcher took notes of the parts that he considered important for the study during and at the end of each session, noted the important parts shared by the clients as they were, noted his observations, and received supervision support throughout the sessions. A variety of data on the case analysis was provided with session notes, direct quotations, observations, notes on the progress of the sessions, feedback received from the clients about the process, especially in the closing session, and the supervisor’s opinions. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, detailed information about the couple and the contents of the session was given, expert help was sought during the analysis of the data, direct quotations were included when necessary, information was given in the relevant part of the study about the family counseling model used, and data diversity was provided.

Spirituality-Oriented Family Counseling Session Contents Flow Chart

The flow, contents, interventions, and impression notes of the spiritually-oriented family counseling sessions were explained in order.

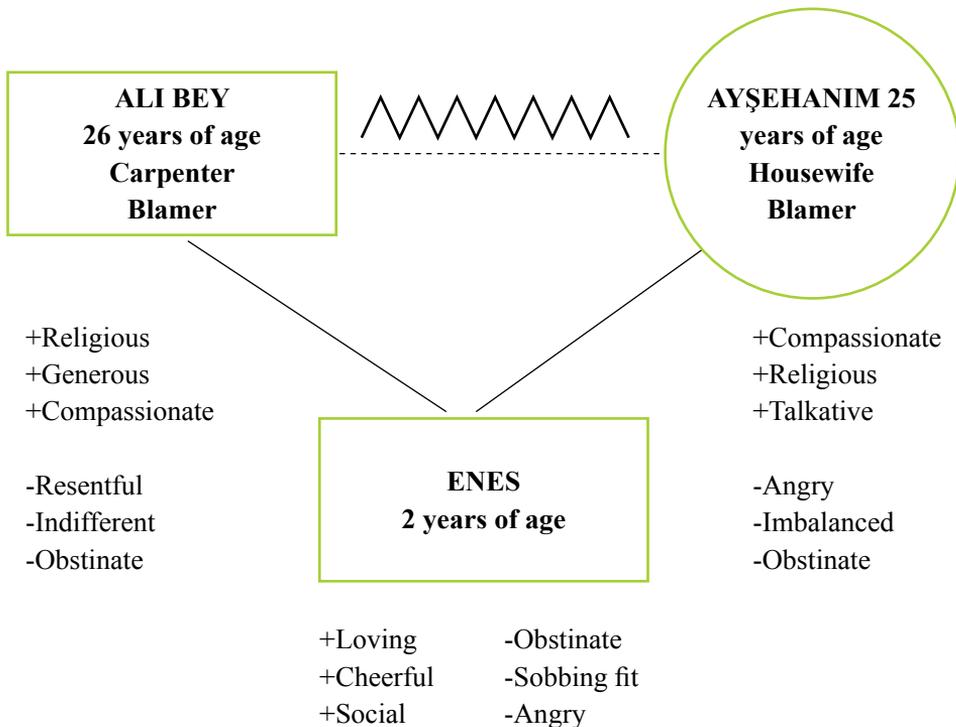
First Interaction/Pre-Interview

The interaction started when Ayşe Hanım, who wanted to benefit from family counseling/therapy services, called the therapist. Ayşe Hanım stated that she had serious problems with her husband and that she wanted to get support regarding her husband in this respect. Ayşe Hanım stated in the first interview that she cheated on her husband, that she did not want to divorce, and that she wanted to receive therapy with her husband on this issue. Ayşe Hanım and her husband were informed about the content of the study and the process. Especially, Ali Bey stated that he was more willing to participate in the study because of the spirituality in the content of the therapy. Ali Bey also stated that he believed that psychologists would not understand his religious sensitivity and said that the contents of the study relieved him in this regard.

Information On Family Members/Identification of the Family

The family had a nuclear family structure consisting of three people. Ali was a 28-year-old high school graduate and worked as a carpenter. Ayşe Hanım was 27 years old and was a housewife. The couple was married for 6 years, and the couple’s only child, Enes, was 3 years old. Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey lived in a small city in the Eastern Anatolia Region. Ali Bey was born and raised in Eastern Anatolia, and

Table 1.
Ayşe-Ali Family Map



his wife Ayşe Hanım moved abroad at the age of 10 because of her father's job and completed primary and secondary school abroad. Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey belonged to a very common sect, especially in Eastern Anatolia; Ayşe Hanım wore a veil. In the interviews, it was observed that religious acceptance had an important place in their family and marriage lives for both Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey. Ayşe Hanım was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, and she was hospitalized four times, one of which was abroad (1 year). Ayşe continued to use drugs. Ayşe Hanım, who attempted suicide twice, ran away from home several times. Ali Bey was a cancer patient, and his treatment continued. The Family Map, created in light of the information received from the clients, is given in Table 1.

Session 1: “My marriage should continue, but I do not know how.”

The couple was given information about the contents of the therapy model and the process in the first session. The information taken in the preliminary interview was reminded, and verbal and written consent was obtained, emphasizing the principle of confidentiality and impartiality. Ali Bey and Ayşe Hanım did not bring their children to the session. Family history was taken from Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey. Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey were cousins (children of uncle-aunt). Ayşe Hanım and her family lived abroad, and she said she saw her husband for the first time on the day she was discharged from the psychiatric hospital (2nd admission). Ali Bey came with Ayşe Hanım's father, and they made the discharge procedures together. After this meeting, they met and married within a year. Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey were asked to list the traits that persuaded them to marry each other. Ayşe Hanım stated that her husband was religious and compassionate, valued her, and decided to marry him because he resembled her father. Ali Bey also said that Ayşe Hanım's morality and religiousness influenced her decision to marry.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: A bond was established with the clients in the first interview, and an atmosphere of trust was established. A family map was drawn with the information received from Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey, and a common target was determined with the couple. Although Ayşe and Ali wanted the marriage to continue by bandaging the wounds of cheating, they had difficulties in how to do it. Ali Bey summarized this by saying, “*My marriage should continue, but I do not know how.*” Although Ayşe Hanım had many meetings with mental health specialists because of the psychological disorder she had, Ali Bey stated that she met with a mental health specialist for the first time as a client, and she had always dealt with psychologists and psychiatrists as a relative of the patient. It was seen that the religious resources of the couple had a very important place in their decisions about their marriage. At the end of the session, the clients were told about their gratitude, and prayer assignments were given as homework.

Session 2: “Divorce me! I cheated on you!”

The second session started with checking the homework assignment. Ayşe Hanım stated that she had difficulty finding things to be thankful for because she had negative thoughts about her husband. Ali Bey also said that he had difficulties because of his anger but that he was finally able to do his homework assignment. Ayşe Hanım said that she cheated on Ali Bey with someone she met online but later broke this relationship and confessed to Ali Bey because she grew a guilty conscience. Ayşe Hanım said, “*Divorce me!*” After the confession of “*I cheated on you!*” Ali Bey did not know what to do, so he consulted the sheik of the sect to which both of them belonged, and the sheik told him not to divorce his wife and forgive her. Ali Bey said, “*I cannot be a father anymore because I got chemotherapy, I have an only child and I do not want to raise him without a mother. Even if I divorce her and marry again, I will not be able to be a father anymore,*” he said and added that he did not think of divorcing his wife but that he had difficulty in forgiving his wife. Ayşe Hanım said that she regretted her mistake, asked Allah’s forgiveness and repented, and wanted the issue of cheating to be left behind.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: Ayşe and Ali Bey were informed about the effects of cheating on couples and marriage. Considering the couple’s decision to continue the marriage, volunteering was taken from both of them to make efforts and take responsibility to overcome the crisis they faced and establish a more reasonable relationship. Ali Bey was emotional when he said, “*It is very difficult for me to share my experiences with others, I was able to share because I felt that you would understand and would not condemn us*”. It was observed that Ali Bey both felt relief and had difficulty sharing his problems. It was also observed that the couple’s willingness to make efforts for the continuation of the marriage and receive support during this process increased the couple’s hopes.

Session 3: “Let Him Look at His Own Sin! I cheated but I was also cheated”

Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey checked their homework assignments and the session started. They stated that they could do their prayer and gratitude homework assignment more easily when compared to the previous week. Ali Bey’s iceberg/internal psychic system related to deception was studied. Ali Bey expressed his anger towards his wife during the session “*How can a person be so low; she will not give up after she has tasted haram*”. He stated that his wife cheated on him while receiving chemotherapy, which angered him even more. “*Imagine, I have no eyebrows, no eyelashes, and she cheated on me. I had my troubles for my life, while she was cheating on me*”. Ali Bey stated that when his wife approached him and showed a smiling face, he still doubted that she was cheating on him and that he could not forget this incident.

Ayşe Hanım responded to her husband’s anger: *“I regret what I did, I do not care much about his forgiveness, may Allah forgive me. He should not deal with me too much, he should look at his sin first, he also cheated on me”*, and revealed a different problem that was hidden between the spouses. During the engagement period, Ali Bey convinced Ayşe Hanım that their religious marriage was held, and sexual intercourse took place. The next day, Ayşe Hanım learned that their marriage had not been performed and had a crisis and attempted suicide, saying, *“We committed adultery, we became sinners”*, and she was admitted to a mental health hospital. Emphasizing that this was a cheating/deception, Ayşe Hanım expressed her anger towards her husband by saying, *“First, let him look at his sin, he deceived me, he committed adultery with me”* and said, *“Just like I told him to ask Allah to forgive him for the mistake he made, and told him that I forgave him and married him, now I repent to Allah, it is more important that Allah forgives me”*.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: It was observed that Ayşe Hanım could not get rid of the effect of the event she experienced during her engagement period, and she felt deep anger towards her husband when she remembered the event. The events experienced by both parties and what happened in their internal and interactional systems were investigated in this session using Satir’s Iceberg Metaphor, and the effect of the couple’s anger towards each other and the relationship was studied. Ayşe and Ali Bey said that although it was difficult for them to talk about these issues, talking without fighting and suppressing made them feel comfortable and they started to think about how the other party might feel. Ali Bey told the therapist about the therapy process, *“I speak so freely and I feel safe because you listen without condemning or blaming, not taking sides and trying to understand”*.

Session 4: “My Husband Never Loved-Liked Me”

The session started with checking the homework assignment. They were asked how their weeks went, and they said that it was good for them to talk about the issues that they had not dared to talk about since they started the sessions before it turned into a crisis, and this started to reflect on their marital relationship. They also stated that they had a quieter and more peaceful week when compared to the previous weeks, started to see the positive aspects of their marriage together with their gratitude homework assignment, and their hopes that their relationship could improve were increased. Ayşe stated that she started to understand the sadness of her husband better and the reason that pushed her to cheat on her husband was that she thought she was not loved and liked by her husband. She stated that her husband always wanted her to be slim and attractive like her sister and that he constantly compared her to her sister. She pointed to the breaking point against her husband by saying, *“One day, after the sex we had with my husband, I asked him why he acted differently. He told me that he had had sex with my sister in his dream and imagined*

me as her, and everything was better". Ayşe Hanım stated that what she told was not an excuse and that cheating was not a correct behavior.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: Ali Bey's comparing Ayşe Hanım with her sister (sister-in-law), attending religious conversations and coming home late, constantly telling her that she was overweight and not showing enough attention, reinforced the belief that Ayşe Hanım was not loved and liked by her husband. When Ayşe Hanım, who was constantly criticized by her mother, could not receive the attention she needed from her husband, she first sought a chat partner to share her problems, and the friendship that started online turned into cheating. The iceberg of Ayşe Hanım was analyzed and the reasons that led her to cheat and the effects of this on Ayşe Hanım were studied. It was observed that Ali Bey was calmer and tried to understand while listening to Ayşe Hanım.

Session 5: "I do not know how to be a wife"

The session started by checking the homework assignments, and the genogram of Ali Bey's basic family was made. Ali Bey was the 5th child of a family of 8 children, and he described the spousal communication between his parents as broken. He also said that he tried to communicate with his siblings only after high school and that communication with his siblings and father had been broken until then. During a religious holiday, his father met with him and his siblings for the first time, albeit by video chat. He stated that marriage gave him prestige in the family and family members began to take him seriously. Ali Bey said that he was exposed to violence in his family, he did not learn anything about religion, he did not meet with his father's uncles and aunts, and there was a serious disconnection in the upper generation. The person he could communicate with was his mother in Ali Bey's family, and he told Ayşe Hanım in the first years of their marriage, "*Do not hurt my mother so that I will not hurt you*". Ali Bey, who had a great devotion to the sect, stated that he learned religious things that he did not know there, he was respected and valued, he was able to establish bonds and he was considered a man there.

Ayşe Hanım said that Ali Bey came home from religious talks at 11 every night and was depressed because he did not take care of her during the first years of their marriage. Ayşe Hanım, who thought that she was not taken care of, summarized the situation she was going through "*I shouted that you can never be like my father, and I attempted suicide again*". Ayşe Hanım understood the importance Ali Bey attached to religious conversations and his mother by saying, "*I was worth less than his mother, his job, and religious conversations, although he was very special to me,*" and said that he did not value her.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: Ayşe Hanım, who saw Ali Bey's broken relationship with his root family more concretely and approved this, stated during the

session that she started to understand Ali Bey's effort to preserve his relationship with his mother and why he was so attached to religious conversations. Ali Bey said, "*My parents' relationship was very broken, I did not know how to be a wife, I thought that I was a good wife and I was interested. But now I see that I neglected him*" and added that he started to understand his wife. The couple's witnessing and understanding of each other's inner processes reflected positively on their relationship. They volunteered to see the needs of the other party and take responsibility for the relationship by giving up the accusatory discourse. The family was reminded of homework assignments and a program was made on which both Ali Bey and Ayşe Hanım agreed. It was decided to go to a picnic with the family at the weekend, the couples agreed on going to religious conversations together once a week, returning home at an earlier hour, and setting up a program with Ayşe Hanım's friends and family on the days when Ali was not at home.

Session 6: "I Want To Forgive"

The session started with checking the homework assignment. Ali Bey and Ayşe Hanım said that they went on a picnic together as planned, Enes was very happy and that seeing their children happy made them happy too. Ali Bey and Ayşe Hanım stated that they wanted to forgive each other and that although their relationship was very good during the week compared to previous weeks, they were negatively affected and angry when they remembered what they had experienced. Ali Bey said, "*Maybe I could forgive the disrespect more easily if it was only against me, but how can I forgive someone who sinned against Allah, was involved in haram and disrespectful*". When Ali Bey said that he could not forgive by referring to religious references, the concept of forgiveness in Islam, forgiveness of oneself and others, Allah's forgiveness, and repentance was discussed in the session. Similarly, Ayşe Hanım pointed out that there were things she wanted to forgive in her husband, and the couple came together on common ground in forgiving each other and making efforts to improve the relationship. They mutually apologized to each other as the first concrete indication of this.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: It was observed that couples moved to the healing part after the cheating process, and seeing the reasons that brought the marriage to this state from the first application to therapy until today was good for the couple's relationship. It was observed that the couple became emotional during mutual apologies, Ali Bey turned his back and cried, and Ayşe Hanım experienced a similar emotional discharge. Ali Bey stated that he could not attend the next session because of his job. Ayşe Hanım said that she wanted to have an individual session during the week that her husband was away, and that this process was tiring for her. Ali Bey said that his wife needed this and he thought that he would express himself more comfortably in the individual session. The next session was arranged as an

individual session with the couple's approval. As well as the double gratitude and prayer homework assignment, the Love Languages book was given as the homework assignment.

7. "I Do Not Love Myself"

Ayşe Hanım said in the individual session that she found herself overweight and ugly and went to a dietitian to lose weight, but she could not lose weight as she wanted because of the effect of using medication. The genogram of Ayşe Hanım's root family was also prepared. Ayşe Hanım, who was the eldest child of a family of 5 children, said that she suffered a lot of violence from her mother during her childhood years, that she was separated from her father for a while because she was abroad, her mother directed all her anger towards her when she had difficulties and blamed her for everything she did. She said that when she moved abroad with her father, she felt safe when her father came home from work. She explained that when she started to study abroad, she was excluded because she did not know the language, and when she decided to wear the hijab at the age of 11, she was made fun of by her friends.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: Considering that Ayşe Hanım described Ali Bey as *"compassionate and caring like my father"* and she expressed her anger by shouting *"You cannot be like my father"* when she had communication problems with her husband, it was seen that she wanted to establish a bond with Ali Bey as she had with her father. Ali Bey's indifference caused the belief that Ayşe Hanım learned in her relationship with her mother to be worthless, disliked, and not worthy of love. The comments made by her husband about her weight and the comparison with her sister strengthened the belief that *"I am not wanted and liked wife"* in Ayşe Hanım. When Ayşe Hanım was asked, *"Do you have a characteristic with which you appreciate yourself,"* she burst into tears and said, *"I am neither a good daughter, nor a good sister, nor a good friend, nor a good mother and servant to Allah, I hate myself"*. It was understood at the end of the session that Ayşe Hanım did not find herself worthy of being appreciated and admired, and this need was studied in the internal system. Ayşe was given the assignment of appreciating herself.

Session 8: "Love Languages"

The session started by asking whether they had read their homework assignments and the Love Languages (*Sevgi Dilleri*) book (Chapman, 2012). Ali Bey, who read the book, said that the first love language was acts of service and the second love language was sexual intimacy. Ayşe's first love language was words of love, and her second love language was physical contact. The couple's recognizing and meeting each other's intimacy and love needs were also discussed. Ali Bey said that his anger towards his wife decreased because of the cheating incident and that when

he approached his wife sexually after cheating, he felt nauseous and distant, but this feeling started to pass with the therapies. Ali Bey said that he noticed that Ayşe Hanım was watching porn and had warned his wife about it implicitly, but that he wanted this issue to be resolved as well. He stated that watching porn was haram, he did not want his wife to sin, but he could not talk about it with her.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: It was observed during the session that the relationship and intimacy between the couple improved. Ali Bey wanted to talk and solve the problems that he could not talk to his wife in therapy. Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey brought up watching porn openly for the first time in the therapy room. It was observed that Ali Bey was quite embarrassed while trying to explain that his wife was watching porn. It was seen that sharing an issue that they could not talk about among themselves with a third person was both challenging and comforting for the couple as the problem would not be suppressed and talked about. Ayşe Hanım agreed with Ali Bey on this issue and said that she was aware that what she did was wrong, but that she regretted the cheating she experienced with her husband and did not watch porn after this. Ayşe Hanım gave her husband the right but said that this embarrassed her and wanted to discuss this issue in an individual session. Upon the consensus of the couple, an individual session was arranged with Ayşe Hanım again.

Session 9: “I Cannot Get Angry at My Mother Because It is Sin”

The session started by checking her homework with Ayşe Hanım. She said that she had difficulty finding things to appreciate herself in the first days, but then she appreciated herself by pointing out the difficulties she faced in her childhood. She stated that she was not aware that she did not give herself the appreciation she had expected from her mother since her childhood, but she realized this with her sessions and homework and it was very good for her. She also said that her mother was always angry with her, not appreciating her in any way, criticizing everything she did, and constantly reminding her how incompetent she was. She also said, *“I was afraid of my mother’s anger, I hated her, I could not love her”*.

When describing her relationship with her mother, Ayşe Hanım talked about her anger and guilt towards her mother. She said that her mother beat his sister who pooped at the toilet door in the early days when his sister was learning the toilet habit, then put her sister’s head into the toilet pan and shouted *“You will do it here!”*. When Ayşe Hanım (when she was 12 years old) remembered this scene, she said that she hated her mother and blamed herself for not being able to help her sister and just watching her mother without stopping her. She also felt guilty and sinful because she was angry with his mother. *“In religion, the mother’s right is more important than the father’s right, but I love my father more. I need to love my mother, but I cannot, I want to be angry with my mother, but I cannot because it is a sin, you cannot even*

say “Ugh” to your mother in religion.” Ayşe Hanım said that she could not share or ask anything to her mother about her adolescence period and beyond, that she started watching porn at the age of 16 while researching something on the internet, and that she watched porn from time to time after that day.

Impression Notes and Evaluation

Working with Ayşe Hanım on her relationship with her mother and listening to her childhood was both a challenging experience and a good opportunity to uncover Ayşe Hanım’s inner resources. Gratitude and appreciation assignments served as a mirror to show Ayşe Hanım her resources. A study was conducted on the trauma related to her sister, with whom she lived. Also, the mother-child relationship in Islam was discussed, the verse to say “Ugh” to the parents was even talked about, and a study was conducted about the fact that she did not feel guilty because she found her father closer than her mother and loved him more, and that this was not a sin. Since it was a challenging experience for Ayşe Hanım to share her childhood traumas, the session was concluded with a Safe Place exercise.

Session 10: “My mother and my motherhood”

Since it was decided to hold an individual session with Ayşe Hanım during the meeting with the couple, the session started by checking the homework assignment given to Ayşe Hanım. She expressed that she wanted to work on her own motherhood in the session because she felt guilty for not being a good mother to her son Enes. Ayşe Hanım, who had a difficult birth process and whose hospital stay was extended, was separated from her baby for 14 days and could not breastfeed her during this period. Ayşe Hanım, who met her baby 14 days later, learned that her mother was breastfeeding her baby in that process, increasing her anger towards her mother. She also shared that she regretted slapping her 9-month-old baby at a time when she was having a nervous breakdown. When Enes started talking and said “Mum”, Ayşe Hanım’s mother was angry with Enes, saying, “*You will call me mum, not her*”. After this sharing, Ayşe Hanım told her experiences by saying, “*Although I hated my mother’s motherhood, my motherhood was similar to hers, I became a mother like her, I hate myself*” and cried throughout the session. Ayşe Hanım’s mother constantly tells Ayşe Hanım that she cannot take care of her son well and that she is not a good mother.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: It was observed that Ayşe Hanım, who was hospitalized sometimes because of her diagnosis and had a difficult birth process, tried to be a good mother, and what she did well about her motherhood was studied and appreciated. It was then observed that the resemblance she established between her mother and her motherhood shook Ayşe deeply, and the bond she established with her mother and motherhood was studied. Guidance was given for her to manage

anger and nervous breakdowns, and psycho-training was given about the issues she had problems with child care.

Session 11: Goodbye and Hello

Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey were asked about how the sessions benefitted them and their relationships. Asli Bey said *“When I first came here, I did not know what to do, frankly, I never expected that such secret and private things would be talked about. There was a lot to talk about on my way here every week, for the first time in my mind today, as I walked towards the session room, I thought to myself, I guess we finished talking now, we are in a pretty good spot”*. Ayşe Hanım, on the other hand, said that she had met with a lot of mental health experts until now. Still, she participated in this process for the first time without being alone. She was able to talk about her relationships and experiences without prioritizing her illness, and this situation was good for her. A final session was held with Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey, and the reinforcement was made by reminding them of their efforts, the changes, and the resources they experienced throughout the process. Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey said that gratitude and prayer assignments were very good for them and that they would continue this practice after the end of the sessions.

Impression Notes and Evaluation: The couple’s willingness and effort for change throughout the couple and individual sessions led to positive changes in the couple’s relationship. When the relationship was evaluated in integrity, it is possible to argue that there were first and second-level changes. In the final session, the positive change experienced by the couple was appreciated by reminding them, of their resources were reminded and the session was ended.

Discussion

The study aimed to present an example of how the “Spirituality Oriented Family Counseling Model” developed by Kılınçer (2021) can be applied in a complex case and to show whether it is effective in complex cases. The present study aimed to uncover the effectiveness of the “Spiritually-Directed Family Counseling Model”, which was developed by (Kılınçer, 2022) in a complex case. In this context, the study was designed and conducted in 11 semi-structured sessions, taking into account the needs of the couple. The model, whose theoretical background was based on Satir’s Transformational Systemic Family Therapy, included integrated gratitude, prayer, forgiveness, appreciation, etc. practices in Islam. Considering the couple’s needs, both the techniques and methods in the Satir Family Therapy Model were used in the sessions, and the sources in Islam were included in the process. From the first to the last session, the couple was given prayer and gratitude homework assignments, which were checked together with the couple.

Although it was seen that there were many pathologies and traumas in the sessions with the couple, a non-pathology-focused developmental approach was adopted in the structuring of the session, in line with the Satir Transformational Systemic Family Therapy. Ayşe Hanım said that it was very good for her and her relationship to talk about herself, her marriage, and her relationships without prioritizing her illness for the first time after many years of interventions for her diagnosis with mental health professionals because of her diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Similarly, Ali Bey, who always met with mental health professionals as the patient's relative and focused on the disease, stated that the therapy process was good for him, his wife, and his marriage, even if the reason for their application was not children. Even their children were happier in this process.

When the sessions were evaluated as a whole, it is possible to argue that the 5 basic elements of Satir Transformational Systemic Family Therapy were included in the therapy. *Therapy is Systemic:* The couple's internal and interactional system was studied throughout the sessions. Considering that all parts of the system's structure were interrelated and affected each other (Innes, 2002, s. 39; Lee, 2001, s. 73), it is possible to argue that there were many positive developments in the interactional system such as spouses mutually forgave each other and their relationships became healthier, their son Enes was happier (Ayşe Hanım's self-appreciation and traumas). *Therapy is Experiential:* The fact that Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey frequently experienced intense emotions during the sessions can be accepted as a concrete indication that the therapy was experiential. It was observed that the couple faced experientialism throughout the studies on emotions, expectations, perceptions, self, and yearnings. The couple also had the opportunity to see many past experiences (i.e., cheating of the spouse, relationship with the mother, childhood traumas, etc.), especially infidelity, from a different perspective, which facilitated the change. *Therapy is Positive-Oriented:* As of the first session, the therapist set positive targets with the couple and supported them in positive changes. In this context, religious couples were reminded of their religious resources and aimed to provide the hope and motivation they needed for change. The couple said that their hopes increased especially with gratitude and prayer assignments. *Therapy is Change-Focused:* The couple sometimes had changed at the first level (i.e., less fighting, less anger, calmness, etc.), and at the second level (i.e., the couple forgave and understood each other internally, allocated more space for each other's feelings, expectations, and yearnings, etc.). The therapist observed the positive change in the couple's communication both with themselves and with their spouses, and the changes were reinforced by reminding them in the last session. *The Therapist is Self-Consistent:* The therapist took care to agree with herself and the couple throughout the sessions. When the couple shared many challenging experiences during the sessions, they talked about the trust and agreement they had with the therapist from time to time. Especially, Ali Bey stated that the therapist's

listening, understanding, and reassuring without condemning them gave him encouragement and comfort to talk about difficult situations. Also, Ayşe Hanım said that when she was sharing her traumas, she shared situations that she was afraid to remember, and that the therapist's approach to this issue gave her strength.

On the other hand, it is possible to see the effects of the spirituality dimension in therapy in several fields. Expressing that they are religious and trying to shape their marriage life accordingly, the couple volunteered when they learned that spirituality would be included in therapy. Ali Bey expressed that religion was the first address they looked to as a solution during the therapy process. He stated that including the resources they sought solutions for in therapy made him feel safer and more comfortable. Another point that the couple stated about the inclusion of the spiritual dimension was that the therapy was familiar to them. The use of familiar concepts made them feel more comfortable. Ayşe Hanım thanked the therapist for understanding her religious sensitivities and said, *"If you did not understand our sensitivities, you would not be able to help us"*.

Another part in which the spiritual dimension is actively involved in gratitude and prayer assignments. The couple was given gratitude and prayer assignments from the first to the last session and were checked at the beginning of each session. The couple, who had difficulty in doing their homework assignments because of the intense anger and disappointment they felt towards each other in the first sessions, stated that they could do the next homework assignment more easily. They even realized that their families had something to be thankful for when they did their homework assignments, and their hopes increased. It was worked on asking for the help of Allah by turning their complaints about their marriage into prayer with Ayşe Hanım and Ali Bey. For example, Ayşe Hanım, who complained that her husband was not close to her, said, *"My God, help me and my husband to find ways to be closer to each other, give us an opportunity, increase our efforts."* A special prayer form was prepared for the problem of the couple reminding them that they should take responsibility and make an effort while praying. Since prayer is the solution source that religious individuals resort to when they face difficulties, their systematic use of this had a positive effect on the change. The results are in parallel with the results of the study conducted by Kılınçer (2022). In the prayer assignment, the couple was also asked to pray privately for each other and it was observed that the couple was happy while listening/saying their prayers for each other. With their spouses praying for each other, they saw the devotion and goodwill they felt for each other but could not see in the arguments, through prayer. As a result of the study, it was found that the results support previous studies that show that the regular and joint religious practices of couples are effective in regulating family life, making the relationship healthier, reducing loneliness, and increasing marital harmony and family resilience (Fagan, 2006, s. 1; Hodge, 2000, s. 217).

The fact that the couple referred to religion in many of their problems, and that Ali Bey first asked the hodja in the sect he was attending when he learned that his wife was cheating, and acted accordingly, shows that religion and spirituality were very effective in the life of the couple. The couple was studied on many issues that they referred to religiously and that affected their marriage life. Forgiveness, love, and intimacy were discussed in this context. Promoting forgiveness in religious sources facilitates forgiveness in marriage and ensures the continuation of marriage (Alshugairi, 2010, s. 268). Similar results were obtained in the study. After the crisis they faced in their marriage, the couple, who did not want to divorce but did not know how to continue, was reminded of the 35th Verse of Nisa Surah, which states that Allah will reconcile couples who want to make peace and make an effort. It was seen that the couple made an effort throughout the process and took responsibility for their relationship.

When the spiritually-directed family therapy was considered as a whole, it was seen that the couple who participated voluntarily had positive changes both in themselves and in their relationships at the end of the therapy. The internal and interactional system was studied throughout the therapies, and the spirituality dimension was included effectively. The couple worked on many problems in themselves and their relationships and decided to continue their marriage more healthily. In this way, the positive effect of the developed spiritually-directed family therapy in complex cases emerged clearly. Conducting the study with a single complex case provides the opportunity for detailed analysis, but it is a limitation of the study. Similar studies with different cases are needed in this respect. The study is also the first case study of spirituality-directed family counseling in Turkey. It is considered that the study will contribute to the literature and similar studies in this field, and will be a model for experts working on how the spiritual dimension can be integrated into therapy, its process, and its contents. It is considered that diversifying case studies will be an important resource for the studies to be conducted in the literature.

Acknowledgments. No funding was received this study. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with ethical standards of the Marmara University/Turkey. Informed consent was given by all study participants.

Ethical Approval. The study named “Through the Inner World: Development of Reclusion Tendency Scale” and approval numbered 07-23 was examined by the Marmara University Institute of Educational Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee and it was decided that the research was ethically appropriate.

Peer Review. Externally peer-reviewed.

Funding. There was no funding for this study.

Disclosure statement. This study is important because the need for studies to be conducted on the establishment, continuity, and protection of the family has become even more with the rapid change in family structure and the increasing

divorce rates in recent years. Family therapy helps family members to deal with and solve their problems with a holistic perspective. The present study aimed to uncover the effectiveness of Spiritually-directed Family Counseling in complex family problems. Developed by Kılınçer, the “Family Therapy Model Using Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy with the Focus on Spiritual practices of Islam” is a semi-structured model created by integrating the spiritual-religious sources in Islam with Satir transformational systemic therapy. The study was conducted in 11 sessions with a nuclear family with one child who applied with complex problems such as infidelity, bipolar disorder, cancer, childhood traumas, relationship problems, porn addiction, violence, and suicide attempt. It was found that spirituality-directed family counseling can lead to changes in the family at the first level (less fighting, less anger, calmness, etc.), and at the second level (for the couple to forgive and understand each other internally, opening up more space for each other’s feelings, expectations and longings, etc.).

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