

Extended Abstract

Drug Addiction and Religion: HİGED Example*

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Abstract

Drug addiction has increased significantly both in Turkey and in greater the world, becoming a serious problem. Addiction, whether a result of individual and/or societal reasons, causes many physical, psychological, social, and economic disadvantages. A total of 1,200 types of therapy methods are used in the fight against addiction throughout the world. In western literature, religious and spiritual support approaches have become to appear in the fight against addiction with increasing frequency recently. In the fight against addiction religion, faith based therapies, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Millati Islami, are used to assist and support conventional therapies in today's psychotherapy schools. The aim of this study is to identify whether faith-based programs are effective in the fight against drug addiction in youth. The study group consists of 8 young individuals who had suffered from drug addiction and who had received support from the Hizmet Gönül Eriği Association (HİGED) that operates in the Sincan district of Ankara, Turkey. In this study qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview form distributed to 8 young individuals who had previously suffered from drug addiction and two executives responsible for them. The revealed that these youth individuals started using drug as a result of individual, familial, and environmental factors. It was further determined that the medical/psychological treatments that they had received during their addiction period was ineffective and, that the faith centered treatment approaches were highly effective in helping them overcome their addictions.

Keywords

Drug addiction • Religion • Faith • Therapy • Youth • Psychology

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Drug use and disorders stemming from this use continue to increase day by day (Uluğ, 1997). The term *drug* describes pills and other substances that include chemical compounds and that are used for non-medical purposes. The term drug addiction is generally preferred to narcotic drug addiction, in the literature (Özmen & Kubanç, 2013). While approximately 1,200 types of therapy are mentioned in fight against addiction (Ünal, 2015). Alcoholics Anonymous stands out in Western literature (Bill, 2001; Khantzian, 2014; VandenBos, 2007).

Claiming since 1935 to provide more effective than medical treatment against addiction, alternative treatment models comprising religious content did not receive the value they deserved. Now, such treatment models have begun to form the basis of programs used by many therapy schools. Another foundation that takes faith as its basis in the fight against addiction is *Millati Islami* (Islamic Nation), an Islamic foundation founded in the USA in 1989. Considering the working basics of *Millati Islami* it shares similar aspects with Alcoholics Anonymous, including a 12 step program. The significant difference is that *Millati Islami* bases its methods of operation on the Qur'an and *sunnah*, or tradition of God's final prophet Muhammad (SAWS), following central Islamic beliefs (Gürsu, 2016, pp. 67–68). The number of faith-centric studies reaching significantly high rates of success continues to increase. The current study examines the *Hizmet Gönül Erleri Dernek*² (HİGED) association and includes interviews conducted with young individuals who have overcome their drug addiction through the help of this association.

Method

Research Model

This study follow a case study methodology appropriate for qualitative research, using a totalitarian single case pattern. In totalitarian single case patterns, there is only one analysis unit (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005, p. 290).

Study Group

A total of eight people participated in the study. These eight people were selected from a pool of volunteers who were unable to overcome their addiction despite having received support from *Alkol ve Uyuşturucu Madde Tedavi ve Araştırma Merkezi*³ (AMATEM) and similar institutions, but who overcome their addiction through the help of HİGED. Participants from 22 to 28 and participants average age was 24.25.

² Service Altruists Association

³ Alcohol and Substance Addiction Treatment Center

Interview Form

A semi-structured interview form was used to collect data in this study.

Collection of Research Data

Data were collected in environments where the participants felt comfortable to express themselves and where voice recording could be made during specific times determined by participants. Interview questions were asked to all participant using the same words and intonations. A voice recording device was used alongside a video recording device to record the interviews.

The findings obtained upon analyzing the data were found to be consistent, meaningful, and compatible with the previously formed framework and models.

Data Analysis

The data collected by the voice and video recording devices were transcribed and analyzed. The resulting text was categorized and put into its final form. The names of participants were not solicited, and pseudonyms were used instead. The data, was subject to content analysis after collection.

Findings

In this section, addiction, as a phenomenon, is examined in three different parts under the subtitles of *beginning of addiction*, *addiction period*, *recovery from addiction*, and *change after addiction*.

Remarks about the Reasons of Addiction

Among the reasons given by participants for becoming addicted to drugs are the lack of interest by family members, being an orphan, unfavorable living conditions, economic insufficiency, the effect of one's circle of friends, and the existence of family members suffering from addiction to drugs.

Remarks about Addiction Period

After having become addicted, most young individuals sought treatment as a result of their families. Seven of eight participants received ambulatory or inpatient treatment in AMATEMs. Among the methods of treatment provided by AMATEMs and in private centers are medical treatment (suboxone), pallet (chip) installation, and psychotherapy. All of the participants stated that they had not received psychotherapy treatment, stating that the suboxone given to them as medication also caused addiction.

Recovery from Addiction and Remarks about Post-Addiction Change

All participants claimed that they had recovered from their addiction the assistance provided by HİGED, stating that the founder of the association, Muhlis Ergün, had a significant effect on them. A common statement made by participants, was that the religious education and practices provided by HİGED and the social support provided by group activities were quite effective in the recovery process. Some of the participants mentioned the effects of religious, Sufi practices during their struggle to overcome addiction. Participants also mention that after having recovered from their addiction, they experienced significant changes in their familial and socio-psychological life. The questions “What problem did you face in struggle to overcome addiction?” and “What should be done?”-asked to the participants are remarkable in exposing the insufficiency of the current institutions and their methods in the struggle to help individuals overcome addiction in Turkey.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is known that addictions in general and drug addiction in particular are on the increase, reaching dangerous levels across the world. Faith centric programs in the fight against addiction, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, have high success rates, causing them to be considered useful by modern psychology and to be included in many therapy schools. The reason for such programs receiving such appeal may be understood when taking into consideration that current medical psychological treatments are unable to achieve the same rate of success. In Turkey, similar statements can be made about the anti-addiction programs pioneered by AMATEM.

Moreover, it is necessary to establish NGOs in the fight against drug addiction programs include spiritual education, as in the HİGED example. In the case that societal awareness and support is provided, the fight against addiction can reach a more effective level. In addition to educational studies, the necessary legal measures in the fight against addiction should be taken, and in place of institutions such as AMATEM that provide treatment-focused approaches, alternative institutions in which rehabilitation central are needed.

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