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## THE CONNECTION OF SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL DISEASES

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### ABSTRACT

Understanding how spirituality affects mental health can provide important insights into treatment and support methods for people with mental illness. In modern society, spirituality is increasingly recognized as an important aspect of human life. It signifies the deep values and life views that people want to live by. A higher level of spirituality aids personal growth and development, including an individual's mental health and emotional well-being. Providing spiritual health care is considered important for the prevention of depressive symptoms and includes activities such as listening to patients, offering peace, respect, comfort and hope. A holistic approach to treating patients is increasingly being recognized and applied throughout the world. A holistic approach to health recognizes the interconnectivity of the psychological, social, biological and spiritual aspects of a person, which is reflected in the application of various methods including medication, education, communication, self-help and alternative therapies. History shows that scientific research has long confirmed the connection between spirituality and improved health. Spirituality seems increasingly important in the context of increased life stress, and recent research suggests that spiritual practices can contribute to the reduction of depressive symptoms. Spiritual beliefs and practices can also provide comfort to people who are fearful or anxious, increasing their sense of control, security and confidence. The effects of spirituality on mental health are individual and depend on personal beliefs, life experiences and the context in which it is practiced. An individualized approach in the assessment and integration of spiritual and religious aspects in the treatment of mental disorders is key. This paper explores the connection between spirituality and mental illness, with the aim of illuminating how spirituality can be both a source of support and challenge for people struggling with mental disorders.

**Keywords:** spirituality, mental diseases, mental health

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## INTRODUCTION

The connection between spirituality and mental illness is a complex and multidimensional area of research that has significant implications for understanding mental health and well-being. Spirituality, often defined as a personal sense of connection to something higher or transcendent, can play a key role in the lives of people facing various forms of mental disorders. Understanding how spirituality affects mental health, whether through positive effects such as increased resilience and meaning or through challenges such as crises of belief, can provide important insights into treatment and support methods for people with mental illness.

Traditionally, spirituality and religiosity have often been associated with positive outcomes in the context of mental health. Research has shown that spiritual practice can contribute to improving the quality of life, reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, and strengthening social support and resistance to stress. For example, people who practice religious rituals or have a deep spiritual connection often report a greater sense of peace and purpose in life, which can act as a buffer against mental illness. However, the relationship between spirituality and mental health is not always straightforward. In some cases, spiritual conflicts or a sense of spiritual crisis can worsen the symptoms of mental disorders. Also, the way spirituality affects mental illness can vary depending on cultural, social and individual factors. Some researchers emphasize the need for a more detailed analysis of how specific spiritual practices and beliefs may affect mental health, taking into account all the

complexities and variations in the experiences of individuals.

This paper explores the connection between spirituality and mental illness, with the aim of illuminating how spirituality can be both a source of support and challenge for people struggling with mental disorders. Understanding these connections can contribute to the development of a holistic approach to mental health, where spiritual needs and experiences are taken into account in treatment and support.

## RELIGIOSITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Recently, there has been a significant increase in interest in spirituality, which can be understood as the result of a growing recognition of the importance of nurturing the spiritual dimension of man. Spirituality is a concept with many definitions, but it is often confusing because it is sometimes confused with the concept of religion. Religion comes from the Latin word "religare", which means to connect, reunite or collect. Religiosity is a complex phenomenon that manifests itself through different dimensions and aspects. It refers to the institutional expression of religious beliefs and practices, including the human search for meaning and purpose in life. Religiosity provides a sense of control and understanding of the world around us, through beliefs, behavior and rituals that enable us to establish a connection with something transcendental, sacred or divine. It also includes the way we understand our relationships and responsibilities towards others in the community we live in (1). On the other hand, spirituality comes from the Latin word "spiritualis" (spiritual) and was first used in the context of Christianity. In

the Bible, a spiritual person is described as someone in whom the Holy Spirit resides. In the middle of the 20th century, the term "spirituality" was often used to describe the Catholic Church. However, with many authors, the meaning of spirituality becomes broader and is no longer tied exclusively to the Catholic Church. Spirituality today signifies deep values and views of life according to which people want to live. In this way, spirituality makes it easier to search for answers to fundamental questions about the meaning of life (2).

Spirituality and religion, although related, are not the same concept. Religion often involves organized structures and rituals, while spirituality is more of an individual experience, focused on personal growth and inner fulfillment. Spirituality can encompass a wide range of experiences and practices, including meditation, prayer, contemplation, and other forms of self-realization. While religion offers a set of beliefs and practices that are common to a group of people, spirituality is often more personal and flexible, tailored to individual needs and experiences. In modern society, spirituality is increasingly recognized as an important aspect of human life. People are searching for deeper meaning and purpose beyond material achievements, leading to the increasing popularity of spiritual practices and teachings. This change emphasizes the importance of inner life and spiritual growth as key elements of general well-being and quality of life. Spirituality can provide guidance and support in dealing with challenges, promoting emotional balance, and fostering a sense of connection to something greater than oneself. Spirituality can also be defined as personal transcendence, outside the context

of reality, in contrast to rational feelings in the real world. This definition emphasizes the relationship between God and man, the supernatural and the natural world (3). Many definitions of spirituality include the idea of two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension refers to intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, that is, to the relationship with oneself and one's environment. The vertical dimension, on the other hand, refers to the relationship to God, the universe or anything that the individual considers absolute, something above himself (4).

The horizontal and vertical dimensions of spirituality help the individual to recognize personal values and goals and encourage the integration of body, mind and spirit. In this way, spirituality allows individuals to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world, while simultaneously developing a deeper relationship with something higher. Spirituality, as a concept, can also play a key role in mental health and emotional well-being. People who engage in spiritual practices often report a greater sense of calm, inner peace, and life satisfaction. These practices may include meditation, prayer, contemplation, and other forms of spiritual discipline that help connect with the inner self and supernatural forces. In addition, spirituality can provide a framework for dealing with life's challenges and crises. When faced with difficult situations, many people find comfort and strength in their spiritual beliefs and practices. This spiritual aspect can serve as a source of hope and resilience, enabling people to cope more easily with suffering and uncertainty. In modern society, an increasing number of

people are looking for meaning and purpose beyond material achievements and everyday obligations. Spirituality offers a path to a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us, helping individuals find balance between their inner and outer lives. Through this integration, spirituality can enrich life experiences and provide a greater sense of fulfillment and connection to something greater than ourselves. Spiritual practice can also have a positive impact on physical health. Research has shown that people who practice spiritual activities often have better immunity, lower blood pressure and a lower risk of chronic diseases. This connection between mind and body emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to health, where physical, mental and spiritual well-being are viewed as interconnected aspects of an individual's overall health. Namely, in 2006, the American Psychiatric Association created the first guidelines and ethical guidelines related to the integration of religiosity and spirituality in psychiatric practice (5). These guidelines were also adopted by other national psychiatric societies in 2010. Later, in 2016, the World Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organization adopted guidelines dealing with the role of spirituality and religiosity in psychiatry (6).

### **SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

The spiritual dimension of man explores the search for the meaning of life, which helps people overcome various life challenges. When health is compromised, people tend to focus on the physical, emotional and mental aspects, while the spiritual dimension is often overlooked due to its intuitive and intangible nature, making it a taboo subject. For most people,

spiritual health requires the development of both horizontal and vertical dimensions of spirituality through different stages of life. Physical and spiritual aspects are key parts of a human being, which strives to achieve happiness, stability and a fulfilled life, which requires continuous renewal (7). Spirituality can be practiced within all religions, and in today's world, the reduction of spatial distances and the rapid exchange of information and goods between different cultures, civilizations and races enable the recognition of the common characteristics of all religions. These common characteristics include striving for self-knowledge, understanding the world we live in, and finding the meaning of life (8).

Spirituality not only helps in personal growth and development but also plays an important role in overcoming difficult situations. People who nurture their spirituality often report a greater sense of inner peace and resilience when facing challenges. Spiritual practice, which can include meditation, prayer, contemplation, and other forms of reflection, provides inner strength and perspective that helps individuals cope with suffering and uncertainty. In addition, spirituality can improve interpersonal relationships and a sense of community. Through shared spiritual practices and activities, people can build deeper connections with each other, share experiences, and support each other in their spiritual quest. This strengthens the sense of belonging and connection within the community, which further contributes to the general well-being and quality of life.

Spirituality can have a positive impact on physical health. Research shows that people who regularly engage in spiritual practices have lower blood

pressure, stronger immune systems and a lower risk of chronic diseases. This holistic approach to health, which includes spiritual, mental and physical aspects, emphasizes the importance of a balanced and integrated lifestyle. A lack of purpose and a meaningless life often lead to feelings of despair, uselessness and abandonment. Providing spiritual health care is considered important for the prevention of depressive symptoms and includes activities such as listening to patients, offering peace, respect, comfort and hope. This type of care was first included in the definition of health set by the World Health Organization in 1948 (9).

A holistic approach to health recognizes the interconnectedness of the psychological, social, biological and spiritual aspects of a person, which is reflected in the application of various methods including medication, education, communication, self-help and alternative therapies. According to the American Holistic Nurses Association, holistic nursing is a holistic practice that seeks to heal the whole person. Florence Nightingale, a pioneer of holistic nursing, taught nurses to focus on the principles of holism, including the unity, well-being, and interconnectedness of people and their environment. This philosophy requires nurses to integrate self-care, self-responsibility, spirituality, and reflection into their professional lives. This often leads to a greater awareness of interconnectedness with self, others, nature, spirit and the global community.

### **CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

The great world religions, such as Christianity, arose in ancient times when people became aware of their separation from the natural environment and

developed more complex forms of shared consciousness. During this cultural evolution, religious revelations and experiences emerged that offered answers to fundamental questions about the meaning of life, suffering, and the true nature of existence. These answers became the beliefs and basic values of religions. Religions thus offer practical guidelines and rituals designed to guide man in his life's journey (10). Spiritual experience can be manifested through different forms of religiosity, but it is not necessarily related to religion. For some people, a spiritual experience is a discovery of the essential self and an opportunity to connect with one's inner core. For others, it is transcending physical reality and making contact between one's own being and the divine, ultimate reality (11). Spiritual experiences, although often associated with religion, can be universal and independent of a particular religious tradition. They can include feelings of peace, connection, transcendence, and unity with the universe. Regardless of the form, spiritual experiences often provide a deeper understanding of life and encourage personal growth and development. In modern society, an increasing number of people are looking for spiritual experiences outside of traditional religious frameworks. Meditation, yoga, mindfulness and other forms of spiritual practice are becoming increasingly popular as ways to achieve inner peace and spiritual fulfillment. These practices allow individuals to explore their inner reality and find meaning and purpose in life, without necessarily belonging to a particular religion. Spirituality, therefore, plays an important role in many people's lives, helping them to cope with challenges, find inner peace and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and

the world around them. Through spiritual practices and experiences, people can find answers to their deepest questions and live more fulfilling and meaningful lives. The authors Leutar and Leutar highlight the features of spirituality as a resource of strength and resilience of families in risky situations through the prism of the Catholic faith (12). Their research emphasizes the need to practice spirituality to nurture spiritual health and highlights the many benefits of such practice.

Spirituality helps alleviate vulnerable relationships or changes within the family, which is especially important in cases of illness, old age, disability, bad partner relationships, poverty or death in the family. The power of spirituality derives from the various forms of its practice, including knowing the value of faith, hope and love, prayer, reading religious texts such as the Bible, visiting religious institutions, belonging to a spiritual community, receiving the Eucharist, confession and pilgrimage.

Families who practice spirituality can increase their cohesion, work on themselves, grow and progress in faith together, foster honesty and love, and learn to forgive each other to get through difficult times. The authenticity of spirituality in the family is manifested through honest and open relationships and a clear division of family roles that are not guided by duty, but by love. The spiritual path is not devoid of crises, as people often face questions about the meaning of life, suffering, the existence of God and dealing with illnesses. However, these moments of crisis can be a blessing because they represent opportunities for growth, deepening faith, and strengthening relationships with yourself and your family. The success of spirituality depends

on the time when it began to be practiced, the frequency of the practice and adherence to the basic principles of the faith. Family members in risky situations should understand grace and faith as undeserved gifts of God that are essential for cultivating spirituality. Problems within the family can serve as catalysts for positive change, encouraging members to lean on their faith, focus on the important things in life, and let go of the unimportant.

## **SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION THROUGHOUT HISTORY AND TODAY**

Every human being has a physical, psychological and spiritual dimension, whereby spirituality has been present since the earliest days of human history. From the very beginning, religion, spirituality and medicine have been intertwined in human life. Throughout history, the approach to treating illness has often been shaped by different religious beliefs, and in many cultures, healing has been considered an almost sacred act. In the Western world, the first public hospitals were founded by religious organizations, and members of religious communities worked in these institutions. During the Middle Ages, many doctors were also priests, and religious institutions gave them the authority to perform medical activities (6).

In the early development of psychiatry, during the 18th and 19th centuries, spirituality and religion played a key role in treatment within psychiatric institutions. Religious institutions contributed significantly to the care of psychiatric patients, and religious rituals, prayers and spiritual activities were considered beneficial for their recovery. In the 19th century, in the United States,

religion was an integral part of moral therapy, which was standard practice in treatment within psychiatric institutions. However, in the late 19th and throughout much of the 20th century, attitudes toward religion and spirituality in the context of psychiatric treatment changed. Religious practices began to be considered to have a negative effect on illness, causing hysteria and neurosis. This reversal of views led to a schism between religion and medicine, resulting in negative perceptions of spirituality and religion in the healing process. Sigmund Freud, in 1907, described religion as a "universal obsessional neurosis", and his negative attitude towards religion was influential among psychiatrists involved in psychoanalysis. In contrast, Carl Jung developed theories that included religious symbols and spiritual aspects, integrating them into psychotherapy work (13).

In the second half of the 20th century, interest in the integration of spirituality and religiosity into psychiatric practice began to grow again. At the end of the century, numerous studies showed a positive connection between spiritual and religious aspects and mental health. The modern period is marked by an increasing focus on spirituality and religiosity as key topics in psychiatric research and debate. Increasing evidence suggests that spirituality and religiosity can have a beneficial effect on treatment and recovery from psychiatric disorders. In 2016, the World Psychiatric Association officially recommended the inclusion of spiritual and religious factors in the clinical treatment of psychiatric conditions (6).

## THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN TREATMENT AND DISEASE

When discussing the improvement of the health condition and the improvement of the quality of life in patients with deep faith, the question arises: is this improvement the result of their spiritual practice or is it perhaps a spontaneous remission according to medical terminology? Spirituality is a complex and multidimensional component of the human experience that has significant connections to health, illness, treatment, and the healing process. History shows that scientific research has long confirmed the connection between spirituality and improved health. Research on this connection began in the 19th century, when about 250 empirical studies were conducted. However, the real increase in the number of studies focusing on the relationship between spirituality and health occurred only in the sixties of the 20th century (14).

Spiritual therapies focus on deep religious beliefs and feelings, such as peace, purpose, connection with others, and understanding the meaning of life. Using prayer and spirituality as a healing method can provide emotional and psychological support to people facing illness. Religion can have a positive effect on health by providing a sense of coherence and purpose (15). These beliefs help people understand their role in the universe, find purpose in life, and develop the courage to face suffering (16). For example, Harris et al. (17) and Unantenne et al. (18) in their research highlighted a positive connection between spirituality and the ability to cope with chronic diseases, which results in improved psychosocial well-being and adaptability (16). Spirituality can provide the strength,

support, and resilience needed to cope with chronic illness, as well as to overcome other health challenges, including stress and depression.

Religious beliefs can significantly influence patients' treatment decisions and health habits, and can sometimes lead to delays in seeking help for people suffering from mental health problems. Therefore, it is extremely important how doctors approach their patients, because their supportive attitude can improve cooperation in treatment and make it easier for patients to cope with their condition. Also, the support provided by the religious community can have a positive effect on cooperation and generally make it easier for patients to cope with the disease. The approach to introducing spirituality and religiosity into treatment should be adapted to each patient individually. It is important to show understanding and respect for the patient's personal beliefs and accept his decision if he does not want to discuss his religious beliefs or spiritual needs. In such cases, treatment should focus on the medical aspect without imposing spirituality.

It is important that the psychiatrist does not show judgment with his attitude, but accepts each patient with regard to his views on religion and spirituality. The inclusion of religion and spirituality in psychiatric treatment should be consistent with the patient's personal values and wishes. Psychiatrists should seek to expand their knowledge of different beliefs and religious practices in order to better understand their patients and their specific needs (19).

## THE CONNECTION OF SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL DISEASES

Research among adults has found a consistent association between levels of spirituality and depressive disorders, with the association being inverse and significant. Spirituality seems increasingly important in the context of increased life stress, and recent research suggests that spiritual practices can contribute to the reduction of depressive symptoms. Studies investigating the relationship between spirituality and depression can usually be classified into three main categories: spirituality as a factor that reduces vulnerability to depression, spirituality as a coping tool for depression, and the benefits that spiritual components can have in the treatment of depression. Intrinsic spirituality, which is based on personal beliefs and inner faith, shows a significant association with lower levels of depressive symptoms. On the other hand, some private spiritual behaviors, such as watching spiritual programs on television or personal prayer, are sometimes associated with higher levels of depression, especially in the elderly (20).

In his review of 850 scientific papers on the influence of religiosity, Koenig concluded that religious individuals often tolerate diseases better, have better mental health and cope with stress more successfully (21). In addition, religiosity and spirituality can positively influence attitudes and beliefs, which consequently improves relationships between health workers and patients, and can contribute to the healing process (22). In his five-dimensional model of depression, Jakovljević includes the spiritual dimension in addition to the



psychological, moral, social and physical (23).

Research shows that spirituality and religiosity can improve general satisfaction and reduce suicidality and depression by providing hope, optimism and a sense of purpose. Namely, there is an inverse relationship between the feeling of hopelessness, which can be a predictor of suicidality, and the level of spirituality or religiosity. Various studies have documented associations between higher levels of spirituality and religiosity and fewer depressive symptoms in various populations, including the elderly, adolescents, people with physical illnesses, and cancer and terminally ill patients. In addition to investigating prevalence, the ways in which spirituality and religiosity can influence positive health outcomes are also being studied (24). According to research by Dervić and colleagues, several factors can help reduce the risk of suicidal tendencies associated with religiosity. These protective factors include moral attitudes, a low level of aggression, as well as the presence of support in the social network, cognitive restructuring, finding meaning in events, internal reflection that improves self-esteem, motivation and participation in personal changes. Additionally, strengthening social ties can also be helpful. Spirituality and religiosity can also have benefits for physical health as they often encourage a healthy lifestyle, including avoiding smoking and drugs and promoting healthy eating and rest. Many studies have shown that people who seek psychiatric help often use religiosity as a coping strategy. Patients deeply affected by their illness often seek religious solace to find meaning in their suffering.

Spirituality and religiosity can help in understanding and dealing with

unpleasant situations and stress without falling into depression. Religious beliefs often provide hope and can motivate people with serious illnesses to cope better with emotions and recover (25). Research dealing with the relationship between spirituality and religiosity and depression often produces contradictory results. While some studies suggest a positive association, others have shown the opposite. Certain studies have observed a negative impact of certain aspects of religiosity, including feelings of guilt, increased levels of depression, and decreased self-esteem. Also, negative forms of religious coping and internal spiritual struggle are associated with worse health outcomes (26). Spiritual beliefs and practices can also provide comfort to people who are fearful or anxious, increasing their sense of control, security and confidence. Positive forms of spiritual coping can reduce anxiety in stressful situations, while negative forms of conflict with spiritual beliefs can worsen it. For example, a recent study of women with gynecological cancer found that women who felt punished by God or abandoned by their spiritual community had significantly higher levels of anxiety (27).

Research on the connection between spirituality and eating disorders, somatoform, dissociative or bipolar disorders is relatively rare. Vitz and Mango discuss the role of Kernberg's psychodynamic approach and spiritual aspects such as forgiveness in the treatment of patients, emphasizing that concepts such as remorse and forgiveness cannot always be addressed through psychotherapy, but require spiritual and moral approaches to treatment (28). Also, spirituality has been investigated in the context of the causation and treatment of

eating disorders. McCourt and Waller analyze how spirituality, along with factors such as gender and acculturation, can influence eating disorders or changed attitudes towards eating habits, exploring potential causal factors of eating disorders (29).

In the last few decades, interest in spirituality and quality of life has led to global changes in the work with chronically ill persons and the development of several instruments to assess spiritual well-being. The Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire (SWBQ), as the name suggests, is a questionnaire that assesses spiritual well-being (30). The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) is a measurement instrument developed by Paloutzian and Ellison in 1982 to measure quality of life and spiritual well-being (31). The Index of Core Spiritual Experiences (INSPIRIT) is a measuring instrument designed for the purpose of identifying intense and concrete spiritual experiences related to the existence of God or a higher power in respondents. This instrument measures key elements of core spiritual experiences, identifying specific spiritual events and subjective cognitive evaluations of those events that result in a personal belief in the existence of God (32). The Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI) is a measurement instrument developed to assess an individual's spiritual development or maturity, using both objective aspects and contemplative approaches to spirituality. It is intended for use in clinical and research settings, based on theological and psychological foundations (33). The Spiritual Needs Questionnaire (SpNQ) is a key measurement instrument developed in 2009 to assess patients' spiritual needs. This instrument enables a comprehensive

assessment of spiritual needs and shows considerable adaptability and utility in different contexts (34).

Several studies have been conducted at the Faculty of Health Studies of the University of Mostar, which confirm the significant correlation of spirituality and religiosity with an individual's mental health. The results of the study conducted by Kvesić et al. show that a lower level of religiosity is statistically significantly negatively associated with a stronger expression of psychological symptoms in oncology patients. Their results show that less satisfaction with physical health is statistically significantly negatively associated with stronger psychological symptoms and a higher level of intrinsic religiosity (35). Dilber et al concluded that religiosity proved to be an important factor in the level of psychological resilience of nursing students (36). Specialist neuropsychiatrist Dragan Babić, full professor at the Faculty of Health Studies of the University of Mostar, is the author of several books in which he wrote chapters on spirituality and mental disorders (37, 38). Professor Babić states that spiritual and religious beliefs affect people's psychological functioning, and that spirituality "facilitates coping with stress and reduces stress in difficult life situations, represents an opportunity to gain social support and encourages healthier lifestyles" (37). Babić et al point out that spiritual therapy is a part of complementary treatment methods, and that it is necessary that experts in the field of mental health not only know about them, but also give them adequate advice (39).

## CONCLUSION

Spirituality and religiosity can have a significant impact on mental health, but this impact is not always clear-cut. Spirituality can provide a sense of purpose, hope and community, which can positively impact mental health. Spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, and participation in religious communities often help individuals cope with emotional pain, reduce stress, and improve general well-being. This type of support can be particularly important for people facing mental disorders as it allows them to find meaning in their suffering and strengthen their resilience. In some cases, spiritual conflicts or a sense of spiritual crisis can contribute to the deterioration of mental health and make the recovery process more difficult. An individualized approach in the assessment and integration of spiritual and religious aspects in the treatment of mental disorders is key.





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## POVEZANOST DUHOVNOSTI I DUŠEVNIH BOLESTI

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### SAŽETAK

Razumijevanje kako duhovnost utječe na mentalno zdravlje može pružiti važne uvide u metode liječenja i podrške za osobe s duševnim bolestima. Duhovnost se u suvremenom društvu sve više prepoznaje kao važan aspekt ljudskog života. Označava duboke vrijednosti i životne poglede prema kojima ljudi žele živjeti. Viša razina duhovnosti pomaže osobnom rastu i razvoju, uključujući mentalno zdravlje i emocionalno blagostanje pojedinca. Pružanje duhovne zdravstvene skrbi smatra se važnim za prevenciju simptoma depresije i obuhvaća aktivnosti kao što su slušanje pacijenata, pružanje mira, poštovanja, utjehe i nade. U svijetu se sve više prepoznaje i primjenjuje holistički pristup liječenja pacijenata. Holistički pristup zdravlju prepoznaje međusobnu povezanost psiholoških, društvenih, bioloških i duhovnih aspekata osobe, što se ogleda u primjeni različitih metoda uključujući lijekove, obrazovanje, komunikaciju, samopomoć i alternativne terapije. Povijest pokazuje da su znanstvena istraživanja odavno potvrđivala vezu između duhovnosti i poboljšanja zdravlja. Duhovnost se čini sve važnijom u kontekstu povećanog životnog stresa, a novija istraživanja sugeriraju da duhovne prakse mogu doprinijeti smanjenju simptoma depresije. Duhovna uvjerenja i prakse također mogu pružiti utjehu osobama koje su uplašene ili tjeskobne, povećavajući njihov osjećaj kontrole, sigurnosti i samopouzdanja. Efekti duhovnosti su na mentalno zdravlje individualni i ovise o osobnim uvjerenjima, životnim iskustvima i kontekstu u kojem se prakticira. Ključan je individualizirani pristup u procjeni i integraciji duhovnih i religioznih aspekata u tretman mentalnih poremećaja. Ovaj rad istražuje povezanost između duhovnosti i duševnih bolesti, s ciljem da se osvijetli kako duhovnost može biti i izvor podrške i izazova za osobe koje se bore s mentalnim poremećajima.

**Ključne riječi:** duhovnost, duševne bolesti, mentalno zdravlje

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