

Research Report
Qualitative Exploration of the Addiction Recovery Process in Turkey
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STG 2002

This research project had two goals. The first goal was to explore twelve step-based recovery from alcoholism in an Islamic context. The original intent of this research proposal was to carry out this project in the Islamic Republic of Iran, but timing and visa difficulties precluded this and the study was alternatively completed in Turkey.

Turkish individuals were recruited from local Alcoholics Anonymous meetings through out the Istanbul area. Extensive interviews explored the manner in which these individuals implement the twelve step approach in maintaining recovery from alcoholism. This is an area of research that is under-studied in psychology. The majority of research pertaining to twelve step-based recovery from alcoholism has almost exclusively focused on Christians in a Western cultural context.

Interviews are still being coded for analysis at the time of this writing, but a few preliminary conclusions may be offered. It would appear that the Muslims that were interviewed for this study utilized the twelve step approach very effectively in maintaining their recovery from alcoholism. The form of the use of AA appeared remarkably similar to the manner in which it is used in Western, cultural contexts. Similarities include: stressing the importance of altruistic activities aimed at helping other alcoholics in maintaining recovery, the critical nature of continued meeting attendance, and the role of prayer in spiritual development.

Possible explanations for the similarities between the utilization of AA could be that the model is effective cross-culturally and is not dependent upon Western worldview

and culture. Alternatively, one may argue that Turkey, as a culture, as has become so “westernized” that it does not present sufficient of a contrast to Western culture to explore the cross-cultural utility of the AA model. It is suggested that in the future, researchers use instruments that measure acculturation to Western perspective as a possible moderator variable in this line of research. It would also be helpful to replicate this study in areas in Turkey other than Istanbul, as Istanbul appears to be the region in Turkey where the Western influence is most heavily felt.

The second research question explored current issues in treating addiction-related issues in Turkey. This researcher is becoming involved in a national survey with Turkish researchers, and, as data is currently being gathered, it is too preliminary to report any results from this study. I did obtain some insight regarding the current state of psychological training and research through my contact with colleagues at Hacettepe University in Ankara. There are some highly positive professional development in Turkey. In the past, American psychological researchers’ activities in Turkey primarily consisted of translating American psychological instruments into Turkish, performing preliminary validity studies and publishing the results. The promising developments that I learned are occurring in Turkey include a transition away from this old pattern. Turkish psychologists are now attempting to create Turkish-centric psychological instruments and explore culture-specific research questions, rather than merely extending the work of American psychologists. I view this development as healthy for the Turkish psychological community. It does raise the expectations of cross-cultural collaboration and demands that the Western researchers be able to contribute to the process of Turkish-centric research rather than merely extending their work into a new context.