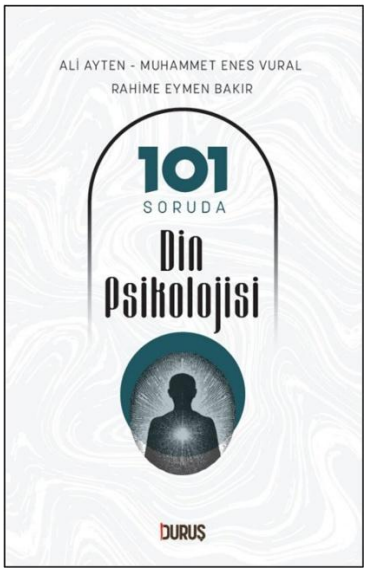
Book Review

101 Soruda Din Psikolojisi

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Introduction

The psychology of religion and spirituality is an empirical, scientific subfield of psychology that systematically explores how faith and sacred experiences shape human cognition, emotion, social behavior, and mental health (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 11). Rather than treating religion as a static, institutional relic, contemporary research examines it as a dynamic individual and collective experience that adapts to shifting historical, socio-cultural, and technological landscapes (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 27–30). By positioning itself at the intersection of psychological sciences and existential human inquiry, the discipline plays a crucial role in mapping the holistic boundaries of human nature and spiritual well-being.

The work under review, titled 101 Soruda Din Psikolojisi, co-authored by Ali Ayten, Muhammet Enes Vural, and Rahime Eymen Bakır, and published by Duruş Yayınları (2026), represents a major pedagogical and intellectual milestone in this field (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 9). Deviating from the linear, dry narratives of conventional textbooks, this work utilizes a highly engaging question-and-answer structure to address 101 of the most critical and common inquiries in the discipline (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 9). This academic review critically analyzes the book's theoretical boundaries, methodological frameworks, developmental insights, clinical dimensions, and local-global syntheses, highlighting its substantial contributions to contemporary literature.

Theoretical Boundaries and Historical Evolution

A foundational strength of the book lies in how it conceptualizes and distinguishes dindarlık (religiosity) and maneviyat (spirituality) in the modern era (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 46). Rather than presenting these concepts as identical or mutually exclusive, the authors analyze the modern phenomenon of individuals who identify as 'spiritual but not religious' through a rigorous socio-psychological lens (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 47). Dindarlık is defined not merely as a cognitive assent to dogma, but as a multi-dimensional, lifelong lived experience (lived religion) consisting of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, experiential, and moral dimensions that continuously adapt to personal and societal milestones (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 11, 38).

The authors trace the historical evolution of the discipline with remarkable geographic and intellectual breadth, systematically reconciling Western, Eastern, and Far Eastern paradigms (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 15). The book maps the birth of religious psychology in the late 19th century through the empirical foundations of William James (The Varieties of Religious Experience), G. Stanley Hall's pioneering developmental work, Edwin Starbuck's The Psychology of Religion, and James Leuba's structural analyses (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 15–16). It places the reductionist, psychoanalytic critiques of Sigmund Freud (Totem and Taboo, The Future of an Illusion) alongside Carl Gustav Jung's analytical model (Psychology and Religion), which frames religious symbols and the God archetype as vital mechanisms for psychological integration and individuation (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 16, 35). It further integrates Alfred Adler's social interest theory, Viktor Frankl's meaning-centered logotherapy (Man's Search for Meaning), and Erich Fromm's distinction between authoritarian and humanistic religious structures (Psychoanalysis and Religion) (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 16).

A key contribution of pages 28 to 38 in the book is the systematic bridging of these classical Western models with Far Eastern meditative systems (such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Zen practices) and Eastern-Islamic traditions of ilmü'n-nefs (the science of the soul) (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 19, 32–34). The authors explain how Far Eastern disciplines were integrated into mainstream

Western psychology via the Transpersonal Psychology school, led by Abraham Maslow, Robert Frager, and Ken Wilber, which focuses on self-transcendence rather than mere self-actualization (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 32–34). This transpersonal lens is expertly aligned with early Islamic psychological models, notably Kindî's cognitive-behavioral techniques for overcoming sorrow and grief in Risâle fî def'i'l-ahzân, and Gazâlî's profound introspective work on moral purification, self-accounting, and the transcendence of the heart in el-Münkızu mine'd-Dalâl and İhyâu Ulûmi'd-Dîn (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 19–20). Rather than adopting a defensive or apologetic stance, the book establishes a mature, parallel reading that highlights the universal human pursuit of existential meaning across cultures (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 27–30).

Methodological Diversity and Mixed-Methods Designs

The measurement of religious and spiritual experiences remains one of the most complex methodological dilemmas in psychology (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 40). The authors argue that while quantitative surveys and psychometric scales are indispensable for identifying broad statistical trends, they are fundamentally limited when trying to capture the highly subjective, ineffable, and deeply personal dimensions of the human relationship with the sacred (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 24). To resolve this bottleneck, the book strongly advocates for the adoption of mixed-methods research designs that integrate quantitative empirical rigor with qualitative depth (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 25).

This methodological argument is supported by concrete, practical guidelines rather than mere theoretical abstractions. The book outlines how researchers can combine statistical surveys with qualitative tools, such as the in-depth semi-structured interviewing of individuals undergoing religious conversion, the participant observation of sacred Sufi rituals (such as sema ceremonies or zikir circles), the narrative and documentation analysis of historical mystical texts, and longitudinal case studies tracking faith development across the lifespan (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 24–25). For young scholars and researchers in the field, this multi-method approach serves as an invaluable blueprint for conducting scientifically rigorous and culturally sensitive empirical studies.

Identity, Personality, and Developmental Processes

The developmental and personality dimensions of faith constitute a major pillar of the book's framework (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 71). Using Jean Piaget's cognitive development stages and James Fowler's stages of faith, the authors demonstrate how religiosity evolves from childhood's concrete, imitative, and 'unquestioning acceptance' phases into the abstract, personal, and reflective search characteristic of adolescence and adulthood (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 44–52). Drawing on Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory, they argue that adolescent religious doubts, questioning, and faith crises are not pathological anomalies, but are essential, healthy catalysts for the construction of a mature, individuated identity (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 73). This developmental process is further grounded in Albert Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, highlighting the powerful role of observational learning and exemplary models (such as parents, teachers, and the historical figure of Prophet Muhammad as uswa al-hasana) in youth identity formation (Ayten & Vural, 2023; Ayten et al., 2026, p. 75).

The interaction between personality and belief is analyzed through modern psychological frameworks, including the Big Five and the HEXACO models, demonstrating how specific traits like conscientiousness and agreeableness positively correlate with stable religious practices, while neuroticism often filters faith through a defensive and anxious lens (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 78–79).

Furthermore, the book utilizes John Bowlby's Attachment Theory (extended to religious studies by Kirkpatrick and Granqvist) to explain children's God representations (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 81–85). This discussion is framed around two landmark empirical models (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 86):
-The Correspondence Hypothesis: Individuals who experience secure parental attachment in early childhood construct positive cognitive schemas of attachment figures, which they project onto the divine, conceptualizing God as loving, compassionate, and protective (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 81, 86).
-The Compensation Hypothesis: Individuals who experience insecure, inconsistent, or authoritarian parenting in early childhood develop avoidant or anxious attachment styles. To compensate for this emotional deficit, they turn to God as the ultimate, perfect attachment figure, viewing the divine as a secure harbor and protective shield (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 85, 86).
Importantly, the book extends this developmental framework into the postmodern digital era, addressing Z-Generation crises and the rise of 'digital religiosity' (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 182–184). Drawing on Jean Twenge's longitudinal cohort data, the authors analyze how the Z-Generation's interaction with decentralized networks, social media algorithms, and horizontal religious authorities has led to a decline in traditional, institutionalized religious affiliation. Rather than a total abandonment of faith, this shift represents a personalization of belief through digital echo chambers. The authors warn of the high risk of 'identity fragmentation and cognitive overload' driven by hyper-connected virtual environments, advocating for the cultivation of 'critical digital attention and mindfulness' as a contemporary psychological coping strategy for youth (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 184).

Religion, Spirituality, and Health

The relationship between faith, spirituality, and physical/mental health is examined with clinical balance, avoiding both theological apologetics and secularizing pathologization (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 110). Utilizing positive psychology as a primary theoretical framework, the authors document the empirical role of virtues such as gratitude (şükür), forgiveness (affetme), and humility (alçakgönüllülük) as powerful protective buffers against clinical depression, anxiety, and chronic stress (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 87, 102). Applying Kenneth Pargament's religious coping theory, the book explains how positive coping strategies (e.g., seeking spiritual support, reframing trauma as a divine test) help individuals maintain hope and cognitive control during life-altering events like severe illnesses, the loss of loved ones, or existential death anxiety (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 115, 125). Physical health benefits are likewise examined, showing how religious disciplines treating the body as an 'amanah' (sacred trust) foster lifestyle choices that prevent clinical substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, smoking) (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 113–114). The efficacy of incorporating spirituality into structured recovery models is illustrated through international examples like the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, Iran's Congress 60, and Turkey's Green Crescent YEDAM support model (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 140–142).
In contrast, the authors do not ignore the pathological or negative manifestations of religiosity (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 117). They explore how rigid, punitive, and fear-based God representations can trigger or exacerbate religious obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), manifesting as chronic anxiety over ritual purity, intrusive blasphemous thoughts, and compulsive cleansing (vesvese) (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 119). Furthermore, the book explores the cultural shaping of psychotic symptoms, noting that while severe conditions like schizophrenia are biologically driven, their delusional and hallucinatory content is profoundly shaped by cultural narratives. This is manifested as demonic or

spirit possession in secular Western settings, and as mehdilik (messianic claims) or cin musallatı in traditional Muslim societies (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 146–147).

A highly innovative addition to this section is the exploration of sports psychology and competition anxiety (müsabaka kaygısı) in questions 88 to 90 (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 187–193). Drawing on Jay Coakley and Watson and Nesti, the authors analyze how professional athletes utilize prayer and pre-game religious rituals as 'psychological armor' to manage extreme performance pressure and fear of failure. Crucially, the text establishes a clear theoretical distinction between magical or superstitious behavior (such as wearing a specific 'lucky' sock or entering the field with a specific foot) and authentic religious ritual (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 192). While superstitious actions attribute control to random luck and physical objects, religious rituals involve submission to a transcendent, benevolent will, which builds genuine, long-term psychological resilience and intrinsic focus (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 192).

Spiritual Counseling, Sufi Psychology, and Islamic Psychology

Spiritual Counseling and Guidance: Institutional Structure and Ethical Boundaries: In the final sections of the work, Spiritual Counseling and Guidance (MDR) services, which have followed a rapid institutionalization process in Turkey particularly in recent years, are analyzed from a broad socio-cultural perspective (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 193). The supportive functions of these services—conducted within the framework of official protocols signed between the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DİB) and relevant ministries—aimed at disadvantaged groups in public spheres such as hospitals, prisons, higher education student dormitories (KYK), child protection agencies, and women's shelters are examined (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 193–195). The authors note that spiritual counseling is not limited merely to transferring religious knowledge or providing guidance on worship, but represents a professional accompaniment process for the individual's existential and spiritual searches during crisis periods (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 194). One of the most significant contributions the work offers to the field is its definitive warnings regarding the professional and ethical boundaries of the experts providing this service (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 196). It is emphasized that the objective of spiritual counselors receiving psychopathology training is not to apply clinical diagnosis, treatment, or psychotherapy; rather, it is to recognize their professional limits and refer clinical cases directly to psychiatrists and clinical psychologists (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 196). In this respect, MDR services are positioned as a complementary discipline operating in coordination with the secular healthcare system, helping to reduce prejudices and fears of stigmatization among recipients toward mental health services (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 196).

Sufi Psychology: Stages of the Soul and Transpersonal Intersections: Another topic addressed within the scope of local and cultural psychological approaches in the book is Sufi psychology, which draws its roots from the Islamic Sufi tradition (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 196). Sufi psychology interprets the individual's inner maturation process (seyr-i sülûk) and the developmental stages of the human soul/self (the seven stages extending from nefs-i emmâre [inciting self] to nefs-i kâmile [perfected self]) through the methodical and theoretical framework of modern psychology (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 196–198). In the work, classical texts such as Al-Harith al-Muhasibi's er-Ri'âye, Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri's Risâla, Hujwiri's Kashf al-Mahjub, and particularly Al-Ghazali's Ihyâ' 'Ulûm al-Dîn are introduced to the reader as essential reference works embodying Sufi psychology's rich conception of human nature and personality analyses (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 197). This traditional heritage is linked to the Transpersonal Psychology school as a reflection of the interest in Eastern-derived

intuitive approaches toward human nature in the Western world, particularly after the 1950s (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 197). In the book, the conceptual reflections of Sufi psychology in modern clinical literature are successfully analyzed through Heart, Self, and Soul by Robert Frager—one of the founders of transpersonal psychology—and Dokuz Yüz Katlı İnsan [The Nine-Hundred-Story Human] and Nefs Psikolojisi [Psychology of the Self] by Mustafa Merter, a pioneering psychiatrist in this field in Turkey (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 197–198).

Islamic Psychology: Epistemological Critique and Theoretical Localization: In the final vital section of the work, the "Islamic Psychology" movement is critically examined, which argues that mainstream psychological theories were produced on secular, individualistic, and Judeo-Christian cultural foundations; hence, applying these theories as-is to analyze the mental world of Muslim individuals inherently entails epistemological limitations (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 198). Historically, reference is made to the pioneering role of Egyptian psychologist Muhammad Osman Najati, who first utilized the concept of Islamic psychology in his 1948 academic works and compared the ilm al-nafs heritage of classical Islamic philosophers with modern psychology (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 199–200). It is noted that the most prominent figure who introduced, institutionalized, and provided an empirical framework for this movement at an international level was the Sudanese psychologist Malik Badri (d. 2021) (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 200). Through Badri's foundational works—such as The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists and Contemplation: An Islamic Psychosocial Study—his culturally sensitive human model and holistic psychological vision that aligns with Islamic principles are analyzed in their theoretical dimensions (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 200). Furthermore, the way Badri encouraged debates on Islamic psychology and the establishment of research centers in Turkish academia by lecturing at a foundation university in Turkey during the final years of his life is evaluated in an objective tone (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 200).

Scope, Limitations, and Controversial Aspects

While the work's ability to cover a broad range of topics is a significant advantage, the concise nature of the '101 Questions' format naturally leaves room for further theoretical expansion in specific subfields (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 9, 213). Far from constraining scholarly inquiry, the inclusion of cutting-edge fields—such as neurotheology and cognitive science of religion—adds a novel interdisciplinary dimension to the work, establishing an accessible foundation that stimulates further empirical and neuro-physiological research (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 170–173). Similarly, while the connections between Western psychological paradigms and the Islamic ilmü'n-nefs tradition are presented side by side, this comparative juxtaposition serves as an inspiring catalyst for future comprehensive conceptual syntheses (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 196–198). In this context, the work functions as a highly valuable, well-structured reference that maps out the current landscape and inspires new research avenues in the discipline (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 213).

Conclusion

In a general assessment, the work in question incorporates the conceptual and methodological body of knowledge in the psychology of religion, presenting it to the reader as a comprehensive guide (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 214). Psychology of religion is not an isolated field; it engages in data exchange with many disciplines such as sociology, education, history of religions, cognitive science, and neurology (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 27–30). The book has endeavored to reconcile historical heritage

with modern clinical research and has proposed enriching the discipline's research methods with mixed designs (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 25, 215).

This work serves as a comprehensive reference source for scholars in theology and psychology, as well as spiritual counseling experts and all readers interested in the subject (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 215). It helps us understand religiosity not merely as a mental acceptance but as a dynamic experience that guides an individual's moral decisions and mental health (Ayten et al., 2026, pp. 11, 109). Despite its methodological limitations, the work successfully brings together many theoretical topics in the field's literature, making a highly balanced and mature contribution to Turkish and global academia (Ayten et al., 2026, p. 215).

Ethics Committee Approval

This study is a theoretical work and does not require ethics committee approval.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declare(s) no conflict of interest.

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