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Chapter

Perspective Chapter: Positive Psychotherapy for Criminal Behaviors

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Abstract

Aware that criminal behavior undermines a society's level of well-being, numerous studies on crime prevention, rehabilitation, and intervention have been conducted for many years. As new information about human behavior is discovered, various treatment and intervention techniques are utilized to regulate and cure deviant criminal behaviors. Legal provisions have been put in place to provide criminal sanctions for preventing and correcting crime. Evidence-based studies have been conducted in correctional facilities. This chapter provides theoretical and practical information on the Positive Psychotherapy (PPT) and discusses how it can be adapted to address criminal cases. Positive Psychology is introduced as the foundation for Positive Psychotherapy. Although PPT has been effective in many areas of life, its potential in the criminal justice system has not been explored. The chapter provides a framework for understanding criminal behavior and emphasizes that not all deviant behavior is criminal. Despite its widespread use in clinical and community settings throughout the USA, Europe, and almost all over the world, PPT has not yet been implemented in forensic settings or penal institutions. The implementation of PPT in the field could contribute to the reduction, prevention, and correction of crimes and pave the way for further research in the area.

Keywords: clinical applications, criminal behavior, pathological-deviant behavior, positive psychotherapy, psychotherapy

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to give information about positive psychotherapy applied as a part of the rehabilitation studies of detainees and convicts who are 18 years of age and over and who have committed crimes and are in penitentiary institutions. Before giving information about the use of Positive Psychotherapy in the practices on the rehabilitation of criminal behavior in prisons, it will contribute to the formation of a holistic perspective to talk about a few basic concepts about criminal behaviors.

Criminal behavior, in the legal sense, is an act that is sanctioned by the legal institutions in a society as a punishment or security measure [1]. The individual who commits the crime is called the criminal and/or the perpetrator. It is known that four factors are mainly effective in the process of the emergence of criminal behaviors; psychological, sociological, environmental, and economic factors. For an individual

to be considered "guilty" in the legal sense, it must be proven as a result of legal processes was committed by that individual. There are two main elements of the criminal behaviors. One is "injustice" and the other is "fault". The elements of injustice are "typicality" and "unlawful" [2]. In order to be able to talk about an injustice that constitutes a crime, it is necessary to determine whether the elements of the injustice have been realized with the act committed. There can be no injustice without action. While deciding on the execution of criminal acts, it is not possible to punish the individual who has no fault. The rate of fault is considered in direct proportion to the punishment to be imposed. In other words, the individual who has committed a crime is held responsible only in proportion to his fault, while deciding on the punishment necessary for the execution of the crime he committed within the framework of the law [2]. The concept of criminal liability comes into prominence.

Criminal responsibility is the responsibility to understand, perceive, and be aware of the legal meaning and consequences [3]. Criminal acts are carried out with the concept of criminal liability. The laws of each country have established certain criteria for this status. The grounds that remove or reduce criminal liability are specified in the Turkish Penal Code as follows: Rule of law and order of the authorized person, legitimate defense and state of obligation, use of law and consent of the person concerned, crossing the border, coercion and force, intimidation and threat, unfair conduct, mistake, being a minor, mental illness, deafness and mutism, influence of alcohol and drugs [3].

Psychotherapies occupy an important place in the rehabilitation of criminal behavior, since behavioral change and modification can only be achieved through the use of psychotherapeutic techniques. Changing these entrenched criminal characteristics of an individual whose thoughts, feelings, and behaviors were organized to form the basis for the crime until he or she entered the correctional system is critical to crime prevention. This crime-prone pattern has a direct effect on the emergence of criminal behavior, which is the most extreme form of unhealthy coping. This effect is the result of the coincidence and interaction of various factors. In the psychotherapeutic practices used in correctional studies during the execution of the offense, these unhealthy behavior patterns and the perceptual, reasoning, inferential, and attributional forms underlying these patterns are intervened in. Psychotherapies aim to raise awareness of the way individuals deal with their problems, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are reflected directly or through interaction. In this context, the psychotherapy process is an interactive process in which the individual reconsiders and works on his thoughts and feelings.

There are few meta-analytic studies on the effectiveness of psychotherapy techniques used in correctional settings. Although there are few meta-analytical studies, the results are promising after applying some therapeutic techniques.

2. Positive psychology as a theory behind the therapy

Positive Psychology is an approach that focuses on positive traits, strengths, and virtues rather than negative, deficient, and problematic aspects. In this state, it is based on the "health model" as opposed to the "disease model" used by traditional psychology.

The term positive psychology, which was brought up again by Seligman in 1998, dates back to Pygmalion, who fell in love with the sculpture he made in ancient Greek mythology. Pygmalion's belief in love with high expectations and falling in love with the statue he made similar to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was named the Rosenthal effect in later years with the experiment conducted by psychologist

Robert Rosenthal [4]. In the Pygmalion effect, it is assumed that high expectations lead to better performance. Abraham Maslow, one of the main theorists of humanistic psychology in the 1950s, used the word positive psychology.

Major advocates of positive psychology are Martin E.P., Seligman, Christopher Peterson, Ed (Edward Francis) Diener, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Tayyab Rashid, James Pawelsky, Barbara Fredrickson, and so on.

Peterson stated that the central themes of positive psychology are the strengths of character, a satisfied life and happiness [5]. Strengths of character are positive traits reflecting in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Strengths can be measured and show individual differences. It is assumed that these have been passed down through generations through an evolutionary process. Some of strengths character are Gratitude, Integrity, Persistence, Forgiveness and Mercy, etc. With the evidence-based research, a total of 24 strengths of characters were determined and they were measured by an objective measure (VIA Inventory of Strengths [VIA–IS] [6, 7]).

Seligman developed the PERMA model, which includes five core components of individual happiness and well-being. These five core components are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. *Positive emotions* correspond to seeing things as they are, and therefore to look at life positively. It expands an individual's mind, point of view, and logic. Thus, it leads the individual to build and find new resources in his individual and social environment and increase individual resilience. *Engagement* refers to all the activities that an individual does in his life, including his hobbies. It allows the individual to focus on the strengths of personality by developing new skills instead of skills that are inadequate in problem-solving situations. *Relationships* correspond to the social bonds that he creates with the people he chooses in his social environment in a way that is specific to the individual. It supports the formation of successful life experiences, including peer relationships, the formation of a sense of belonging, the reinforcement of this feeling, and the individual's feeling of security created by the need to be together. *Meaning* directly corresponds to a purpose or existence that has purposes. It occurs and takes shape when the opportunity to rewrite the individual's perspective on life is created by a bunch of new and regulating possibilities. Meaning is defined as the individual's belonging to and serving something greater. Having a purpose helps an individual focus on what is important in the face of significant challenges or adversities. *Accomplishment* corresponds to all life experiences that correspond to a sense of overcoming and achievement. Overcome follows the empowerment created by interest, practice, purpose, and hope. The PERMA model can easily be adapted to group therapy practices in penitentiary institutions. Both the exercises related to the strengths of the personality and the group sessions to be made in line with the PERMA model have an important effect on behavior modification [8–10].

3. Positive psychotherapy (PPT)

Positive Psychotherapy (PPT) has been defined as the scientific study of human flourishing and optimal functioning with the studies of character strengths, positive resources, and virtues. Prior to commencing therapy sessions, "Values in Action" test is administered to the participating convicts to identify their areas of strength. This also helps in deciding whether they will receive individual or group psychotherapy.

Considering the basis of the formation of criminal behaviors, it is possible to teach healthy behavior patterns to convicts by seeing and imitating them through group

therapy sessions and to bring what they have learned into their behavioral repertoire. Through positive therapy exercises such as "gratitude", "good and bad memories", "altruism", and PERMA inmates gain a new understanding of helping others without expecting anything in return, the impact of memories on their lives, and the importance of gratitude toward others. Recognizing their individual positive resources, especially gratitude altruism, whether in individual or group therapy sessions, can neutralize, albeit slowly, the pathological learning that leads the offender to demonstrate criminal behavior.

Convicts in Positive Therapy sessions are encouraged to develop practical wisdom of strength of their character being relevant to their criminal act. As convicts navigate their strengths, they may learn to manage their emotions, including anger and frustration. Through the individual and group sessions, the convicts can translate their abstract signature strengths into their concrete actions.

The present chapter aims to encourage the implementation of this new approach, PPT, in forensic settings, which has not yet been put into use. To better understand the differences of Positive Psychotherapy from the traditional therapeutical approaches, it's functional to review the main components of the three major therapies. **Table 1** highlights these with their key elements.

3.1 Positive psychotherapy (PPT) with individual sessions

It is aimed to realize the strengths of the personality in individual positive psychotherapy sessions. First of all, signature strengths are discovered to encourage participation and solve potential problems. Attempts are made to convert these signature strengths from inconcrete to concrete actions. For example, exercises are made to help the convict, who states that he is honest, to focus on the concrete aspects of his honesty in his own life. Clients are encouraged to develop practical wisdom. They are allowed to understand which signature strengths is related to their problem behaviors throughout the sessions. Change is provided with various PPT exercises aimed to retrain attention, memory, and expectations away from the negative and destructive toward the future-oriented being positive and hopeful.

Rashid and Seligman presented a model of individual positive psychotherapy of 12 to 14 sessions [11–15]. The content of the sessions can be summarized as follows.

All therapy sessions include psycho-educational exercises. During the 1st session, orientation work is done as in all therapies. How therapy works, rules, confidentiality, etc. topics are discussed. The 2nd session is the introductory session. The client is asked to write a positive introduction story of 200–300 words maximum in their own words. In the 3rd session, strengths of character and dynamic strength assessments are made. In the 3rd session, Signature Strengths are revealed. The client and therapist work to integrate them into the client's life by tangibly aligning signature strengths with specific, measurable, fulfilling life experiences. In the 4th session, positive and negative memories and their vital projections will be discussed, as well as their contribution to the development of problems. It is asked to write memoirs about it, and it is talked about. In the 5th session, the concepts of forgiveness, forgiving, and what the client cannot do are discussed. In the 6th session, the topic of gratitude is discussed. In this session, positive and negative memories are revisited and discussed in the context of gratitude. Since the 7th session is the middle of the therapy process, what has been done so far is reviewed and feedback is given. Session 8 discusses the extent to which the client is satisfied with the dimensions identified, and if not, how

Criteria	Psychodynamic Therapies (PT)	Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBT)	Positive Psychotherapy (PPT)
Focus on	Changing problematic behaviors, feelings, and thoughts by discovering their unconscious meaning and motivations	Learning's role in developing normal and abnormal behaviors and Thoughts and behaviors	Satisfaction about past, optimism about future, happiness in the present
The objective of therapy	Self-awareness, insight, resolution of transference, adjusted emotional experiences – eradication of the problematic behavior pattern and change in the personality trait that underlies the problematic behavior	The reasons for everyday experiences are related to how they are perceived externally or internally. Changing thoughts lead to changing how feel and what do.	To achieve successful therapeutic outcomes, it is more beneficial to identify and work on positive resources rather than solely focusing on deficiencies and weaknesses through lengthy analysis. Awareness of character strengths, virtues Renewing strength and the virtues
Duration and frequency	50 min. From 12 sessions – to the needs of the client 90 min. For a group therapy session	50 min for individual therapy 90 min for group therapy session 12–20 sessions both group and individual therapy	50 min. For individual PPT 90 mins. For group PPT 8 sessions for group PPT 14 sessions for individual therapy
The role of therapist	Pasif and Supportive	Active and sometimes Directive	Active, Directive and Guide
Basic strategies and techniques	Self-disclosure, empathy, "here and now" – "there and then"	Correction of distorted thoughts, abstractions and attributions Objective measurements, Evidence based technicals	Here and Now Psychoeducation and Discussion sessions Evidence-based, objective measurement
Session plan	Orientation and preparation of the convict (2–5 min) Warm-up (5–10 min) Structured exercises (20-30 min) Review of the session (5–10 min)	Orientation and preparation of the convict (2–5 min) Warm-up (5–10 min) Structured exercises (20-30 min) Review of the session (5–10 min)	Orientation and preparation of the convict (2–5 min) Warm-up (5–10 min) Structured exercises (20-30 min) Review of the session (5–10 min)

Table 1.
The main features of the major therapeutic approaches.

to maximize them. It is about how to make what one cannot do, doable. This is where signature strengths are used. The 9th session is the session where hope and optimism are emphasized. Possible traumatic life experiences in convicts and post-traumatic growth after the experience are emphasized. The point here is that when one door closes, another opens. In the 10th session, the client is guided to the experiences they have had in their life that are active and constructive. In this session, the emphasis is on positive communication. The 11th session is about the character strengths of

important people in his social environment. The theme of the 12th session is Savoring. The client is introduced to various activities of enjoyment by talking about savoring. The 13th session is the Altruism session. It is determined if the client has any altruistic experiences among his previous experiences. These last two sessions are crucial for the elimination of criminal behavior. In the 14th session, the client's life is discussed in terms of positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishments, taking into account his past experiences.

All exercises and homework in Positive Psychotherapy aim to reconstruct expectations, attributions, memories, and interests resulting from negative and potentially traumatic experiences. The aim is to reconstruct the traces of negative experiences and memories by ordering and correcting them through sessions. In this direction, discussions are conducted. This relearning and correcting situation is reinforced by homework and essays, and the improvement works are accelerated by their support and development. The problematic psychosocial development chain of experiences underlying criminal behavior is rearranged.

3.2 Positive psychotherapy (PPT) with group sessions

Positive group therapy is a cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, systemic model of therapy in which all the principles of the positive psychology approach are applied. All sessions are conducted at the level of psychoeducational sessions. The first 10 minutes of each session are devoted to summarizing the previous session, and group members talk about what they have done since the last session. At the end of each session, homework is given for the next session. Members come to the next session prepared. Each group session lasts 90–120 minutes. However, it varies on average between 90 and 120 minutes. The total number of sessions is eight sessions. In some cases, an additional session may be conducted as an out-of-group activity at the request of the therapist. It has been reported that an out-of-group activity in positive group therapy sessions conducted in a non-clinical setting is effective in retaining newly learned information and positioning its place in behavioral knowledge (19–21). Using an Altruistic approach to this unique outdoor activity, group members can decide together with the therapist.

In the group sessions with a total of eight sessions, the discussion topics of each session are treated separately and deepened by homework. These topics are respectively in the 1st session: the exploration of signature strengths, the promotion of the use, and functionalization of the strengths. In the 2nd session, three positive "things" in their lives are discussed. In the 3rd session, gratitude and its impact on one's life is discussed. The 4th session discusses savoring; enjoyment. In the 5th session, active, constructive behavior is discussed. In the 6th session, how one has reached the present point is discussed - life successes and achievements are discussed in turn. In the 7th session, the subjective definition/meaning of happiness is considered. In the 8th session, positive support and assistance - including the use of the PERMA model to integrate achievements into the behavioral repertoire for future use - is applied.

3.3 Assessment of the outcome of the positive psychotherapies (Individual/Group)

The Positive Psychotherapy Inventory (PPTI) was developed to evaluate how much change the applied positive psychotherapy method (individual or group) provides and how the functionality of its specific active components is. The validity and reliability

of PPTI have been proven in other countries [16–18]. In studies using both group and individual positive psychotherapy, the positive psychotherapy Inventory provided systematic evidence [19–21]. While no forensic studies exist, Wittekind's study on positive psychology techniques in a penitentiary provided robust findings [22].

VIA-IS (Values In Action - Inventory of Strengths) is a 240-item, 5-point self-assessment scale [23]. It was developed to identify respondents' character strengths. The scale contains a total of 24 character strengths. Each of them also contains 10 sub-items. This is the same for both the VIA classification and the scale.

4. Discussion

The negative emotion and thought state created by pathological coping ways put the individual who takes action to solve the problem in different and sometimes more challenging and difficult situations. These difficult situations serve as one of the factors that prepare the ground for the emergence of criminal behavior. There are two basic and evidence-based theories of psychosocial development that reveal this tendency toward crime. One of them is Piaget's [24] and the other is Kohlberg's [25] developmental theories. Today, Kohlberg's theory is very useful in diagnosing the tendency to crime and deciding on appropriate intervention methods.

Considering the emergence of criminal behaviors, positive psychotherapeutic interventions aim to increase the awareness of the individual by trying to explain human feelings, thoughts, and behaviors based on human values and virtues, and by trying to gain the ability to see the points that are present in the current behaviors and need to be regulated, with what the individual has and what is as it is (positivism). The methods also offer the possibility of using what the individual has learned about himself for the future and his achievements in the past.

Seligman's PERMA model, for example, was developed to raise awareness of positive mood, attachment, healthy relationships, the construction of meaning in life, and successful life experiences that never came to mind when they entered their current state. In this line if the PERMA model put forward by Seligman is applied with all its dimensions to detainees and convicts in penitentiary institutions and integrated into rehabilitation works, it will directly affect the achievement of important steps in behavior change and modification.

As Pawelski pointed out, Positive Psychology is the scientific approach of the strengths that help individuals and communities succeed. This field is based on the belief that people want to sustain and fulfil their lives, develop a sense of the best in themselves, and improve their life experiences [26].

Rashid stated that "Several PPT exercises aim to re-educate attention, memory, and expectations away from the negative and catastrophic, and toward the positive and the hopeful" [11]. This guidance by Rashid suggests that Positive Psychotherapy is a promising approach to rehabilitation, reduction, and prevention of criminal behavior.

5. Conclusion

In the present chapter, after presenting a general framework for criminal behavior, the approach of Positive Psychotherapy, an effective new therapeutic method that can be used in the rehabilitation of criminal behavior, and its practical application are explained.

Positive psychotherapy (PPT) is used in mental health practices of all European countries, starting with the United States of America, although it does not be implemented and used in forensic settings. However, some positive psychology techniques are increasingly used in correctional institutions where criminal behavior is rehabilitated. In some countries, the techniques of this approach are used as part of resilience training in military schools and institutions where members of the armed forces are trained. It is more helpful if the PPT will be implemented into these settings too. It is obvious that this approach, which is very useful for the army and mental health institutions, will also be useful in preventing and reducing criminal behavior if it is applied in all correctional institutions.

The goal of this therapeutic approach is, in fact, to improve the quality of the individual's life. The individual learns to give meaning to his life by recalling and relearning his strengths, his moral and virtuous values. Through this approach, human values are reconsidered.

The individual's strengths, potential resources, positive and functioning qualities are uncovered, and by working on them together during the therapeutic process, the resulting awareness is integrated into the individual's life. This point also has the potential to provide significant benefits to the criminal population. In other words, it is critical to correctional interventions and the prevention of criminal behavior.

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