

Poster

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[P-34-05] The Potential of Naikan Therapy as a Glocal Psychotherapy: A Buddhist Perspective on Its Mechanism and the Value of “SUNAO”

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Keywords : Naikan Therapy, Buddhist, SUNAO

Background: Naikan therapy is one of the few psychotherapies developed in Japan, but it is not necessarily considered mainstream within Japanese psychotherapy. Meanwhile, mindfulness is gaining global attention, and the Japanese clinical psychology community, which has long overlooked the value of Eastern culture, now needs to reexamine the glocal potential of Naikan therapy. Naikan therapy was developed based on the ascetic practices of a Buddhist sect, but its religious elements have been removed. However, the unique mechanism that allows Naikan therapy to transcend religion and become a form of psychotherapy remains unclear. Therefore, this study examines the mechanism of Naikan therapy through interviews with Buddhist scholars and focuses on the psychological state of “SUNAO,” which is considered one of the states achieved through Naikan therapy, and its value. Method: In June 2025, I conducted interviews with Buddhist psychologists and Buddhist practitioners. The transcripts were analyzed using the KJ method. This research was conducted after ethical review by the author's university.

Results: Five categories were extracted: “using the non-ordinary,” “a structure of suffering is built in,” “the existence of others as a mechanism of salvation,” “SUNAO as a state of mind,” and “the significance of Naikan as a form of psychotherapy.”

Discussion: Naikan therapy shares similarities with Buddhist ascetic practices in that it involves placing oneself in an extraordinary setting and incorporating mechanisms that enable the experience of suffering. However, it was suggested that introspective therapy also incorporates several unique elements not found in Buddhist practices. Additionally, the unique psychological state of “SUNAO” specific to Japan was considered to hold distinctive value. The findings of this study present a new understanding of Naikan therapy that differs from conventional views, and it is believed that this has unique value as a form of psychotherapy in modern society. The potential of Naikan therapy as a “glocal” psychotherapy with cultural specificity yet global appeal, as well as the value of Eastern culture derived from it, is suggested.