

## Integration of Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology

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### Abstract

*This research explores the valuable intersections and synergies between Sufism and transpersonal psychology, focusing on how these two disciplines can provide deep insights and solutions to social and individual challenges in the modern era. Facing an identity crisis, existential anxiety, and an increasingly urgent search for the meaning of life, this study shows that Sufism and transpersonal psychology offer rich alternative perspectives and practices for answering these existential questions. Through a phenomenological qualitative methodology, the research collected and analyzed data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with students and supervisors at the Al-Huda Islamic Boarding School in Central Lombok, an environment rich in spiritual and academic practices. The research results show that integrating Sufistic spiritual understanding and transpersonal psychological insight facilitates holistic self-development, providing guidance for achieving higher consciousness and a more meaningful life. In this context, Sufism, with its focus on the direct experience of the divine presence, and transpersonal psychology, emphasizing the expansion of consciousness beyond the ego, both serve as valuable guides in navigating the complexities of human existence. This research underlines that the dialogue between Islamic spiritual traditions and modern psychological science enriches our theoretical understanding and daily practice in dealing with contemporary issues, offering new views on the potential for self-integration and achieving spiritual depth in the current era.*

**Keywords:** *Sufism, Transpersonal Psychology, Spirituality, Integration, Awareness.*

### INTRODUCTION

In facing increasingly complex social and individual challenges in the modern era, studying Sufism and psychology, especially transpersonal psychology, shows significant relevance. This research is motivated by several key questions related to contemporary issues in Sufism and psychology, which indicate the need to explore the relationship between the two. The emergence of dissatisfaction with materialistic and rationalistic views of life, which cannot answer deep questions about the meaning of existence, reflects the need to examine how Sufism and transpersonal psychology can offer alternative perspectives and solutions. The current social and cultural context, characterized by an identity crisis, existential anxiety, and an increasingly urgent search for the meaning of life, strengthens the case for increased integration and synergy between Sufism and psychology.

Recent research confirms an increasing trend in accepting and integrating spirituality principles in clinical and counselling psychology. With its focus on direct spiritual experience, Sufism offers a rich and profound view of self-development and attaining higher consciousness, which is very much in line with the goals of transpersonal psychology. This research aims to identify and understand contemporary issues in Sufism and psychology that are relevant to today's challenges, explain the relevance and potential synergy between the two in helping individuals face identity crises and existential anxiety, and present the latest developments in concepts and practices from both fields that can contribute significantly on psychology and spirituality.

Although rooted in different traditions and principles, Transpersonal psychology and Sufism, both focus on exploring and understanding the spiritual dimensions of humans. Their differences lie in origins and methodology. Transpersonal psychology emerged from the Western psychological tradition and recognizes experiences that transcend the boundaries of the ego through approaches that can include both qualitative and quantitative, seeking to integrate transpersonal aspects into a broader understanding of human psychology. Meanwhile, Sufism is rooted in Islamic spiritual traditions, offering a direct path to divine experience through

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meditation, dhikr, and other more personal and subjective spiritual practices, often under the guidance of a spiritual teacher (Zamhari, 2012).

Even so, these two fields share strong similarities in discussing the dimensions of spirituality, especially in terms of the search for meaning and purpose in life, self-integration, and understanding consciousness. Both transpersonal psychology and Sufism recognize the importance of the individual's journey toward deeper self-understanding and attaining consciousness beyond superficial self-perception. Both offer insights into how integrating spiritual or trans-personal consciousness can assist individuals in achieving their full potential and living life more fully and meaningfully (Peacock, 2015).

In their efforts to overcome the modern existential crisis and provide solutions to the search for meaning in life in an era where material things often dominate, transpersonal psychology and Sufism emphasise the value of spiritual experience. This shows that although the paths taken are different, the ultimate goal of both – empowering individuals to access and integrate the spiritual dimensions of their existence in everyday life is very similar. Through exploring this spiritual dimension, transpersonal psychology and Sufism offer valuable perspectives for individuals seeking a broader understanding of themselves and the world around them (Abenante, 2017).

Through this exploration, a new understanding of the relationship between Sufism and psychology can be opened, which can concretely provide solutions to modern problems individuals and society face. This study aims to show that integration between the spiritual depth of Sufism and the insights of transpersonal psychology can provide a strong foundation for overcoming the sense of spiritual emptiness and the crisis of meaning that is increasingly common in the contemporary era.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research will apply a complex and in-depth qualitative phenomenological methodology to explore the extent of integration and interconnectivity between Sufism and transpersonal psychology and its impact on understanding the spiritual dimension of humans (Jehn, 1997). Through this approach, the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of the participants who are practitioners of Sufism and are involved in transpersonal psychology. The selection of participants will be purposive, ensuring that each individual provides specific insights based on their direct experience with Sufism practices, transpersonal psychology, or both (Austin, 2015). The data collection process will rely on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as the primary tools to explore how participants understand and integrate spiritual aspects in their lives and how the interaction between Sufism and transpersonal psychology influences their spiritual views and practices. In keeping with the phenomenological method, the data collected will be analyzed to identify common themes and variations in participants' experiences and perspectives, hoping to understand the phenomenon under study from their perspective. This analysis will be assisted by a triangulation process, where information from various sources will be cross-checked to validate the findings and involve participants in a feedback process to ensure accurate interpretation of the data. This methodological approach ensures depth of analysis and enriches understanding of how individuals experience and interpret the often difficult-to-explain spiritual dimensions of life (Hicks, 2015). Through this rigorous and participatory approach, the research hopes to provide valuable insight into the interactions between Sufism and transpersonal psychology in the context of spiritual experience while significantly contributing to both fields' literature and practice.

## **RESULTS**

### **Transpersonal Psychology**

Transpersonal Psychology is a branch of psychology that expands beyond the traditional boundaries of psychology to include spiritual and metaphysical aspects of human experience. The primary focus of Transpersonal Psychology is to explore dimensions that go beyond personal identity or ego, entering areas involving unity, spirituality, and higher consciousness (Guo, 2022). This approach combines various spiritual and philosophical traditions with the principles of modern psychology, attempting to understand, describe, and facilitate personal growth and transformation beyond ordinary individuals' capacities. Transpersonal

Psychology studies phenomena such as peak experiences, meditation, near-death experiences, and altered states of consciousness to increase well-being and a deeper understanding of the self and reality. Through empirical and theoretical research, transpersonal psychology seeks to bridge science and spirituality, offering a more inclusive and holistic perspective on human nature and human potential (Luke, 2022).

In its development, Transpersonal Psychology has challenged several basic assumptions of conventional psychology, especially those related to understanding consciousness and reality. This has encouraged the exploration of more flexible and inclusive research methodologies, accepting qualitative and quantitative approaches to understanding complex and often difficult-to-measure psychological phenomena (Strong, 2023). For example, research methods used in Transpersonal Psychology may include narrative analysis, phenomenological studies, and transpersonal research that explicitly recognizes and utilizes altered states of consciousness to gain insight (Laws, 2022). In addition, Transpersonal Psychology makes significant contributions to clinical practice and psychotherapy. Several transpersonal therapies, such as Transpersonal Psychotherapy, Holotropic Breath Therapy, and meditation-based therapies, have been developed to help individuals integrate their spiritual and metaphysical experiences into their daily lives, as well as address mental health issues with a more holistic and person-centred approach. These approaches often recognize the importance of spiritual growth and personal transformation as essential components of psychological well-being (Creasy, 2020).

The academic and practitioner community in this field also collaborates widely with other disciplines, such as neuroscience, quantum physics, and religious studies, to explore how transpersonal concepts interact with scientific understanding of the world (Koçak, 2022). This creates a rich multidisciplinary perspective, connecting knowledge from different fields to provide a more comprehensive view of human potential and reality. It is important to emphasize that while Transpersonal Psychology explicitly includes elements of spirituality, it is not tied to any particular religion or spiritual tradition (Sonnex, 2022). Instead, it promotes openness and inclusivity in exploring the broad spectrum of human experience. It encourages individuals to discover and prioritize the truths and values that best suit their experiences and pursuits.

### Meaning of Sufism

In its journey through the history and spiritual dimensions of Islam, Sufism stretches widely in its understanding and practice. Etymologically, the word "Sufism" comes from Arabic, often associated with the phrase "şūf", meaning "wool", referring to the woollen robes worn by early practitioners as a symbol of simplicity and rejection of worldly luxury. This reflects the essence of this spiritual journey: the search for purity of heart and total submission to the will of Allah (SWT), distancing oneself from material splendour and busyness to achieve closeness to the Creator (Astuti, 2022).

In its terminology, Sufism has developed into a scientific discipline that explores the depths of Islamic faith and practice, focusing on self-purification, control of desires, and soul purification. This is not just about outer rituals or worship but also about inner transformation, reaching a state where the heart is wholly attached to Allah (SWT), seeking His pleasure, and walking on His guidance with awareness and free will of everything other than God (Taj, 2022).

Al-Qur'an verses that support discussions about Sufism and the importance of purifying the soul can be found in Surah Al-A'la (QS 87:14-15): "*Indeed, fortunate is the person who purifies his soul, remembers the name of his Lord, and then prays.*" (QS. Al-A'la: 14-15)

This verse emphasizes the importance of purifying the soul to achieve true luck and success in life. Through self-purification (Tazkiyat an-nafs) and remembering Allah (Dzikrullah), a Muslim can reach more profound closeness with the Creator, ultimately leading to salvation and ultimate happiness.

Thus, Sufism lays the foundation for a deep spiritual journey in Islam, carrying out the mission of achieving purity of heart and living life according to divine values. Through understanding the etymology and terminology of Sufism, along with the Qur'an's emphasis on the importance of purifying the soul, we are invited to delve into the depths of Islam, which are not only limited to aspects of rites and Shari'a but also penetrate the spiritual

dimension which directs us to the primary goal of life: bringing us closer to life. Yourself to Allah SWT (Azami et al., 2023).

Interestingly, we find several significant similarities when we connect Sufism in Islam with the concept of Transpersonal Psychology in the modern world. Both disciplines delve into dimensions beyond everyday human perception and experience, exploring the potential beyond the ego domain and limited individual consciousness (Abbas et al., 2013). Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology both emphasize the importance of an internal journey toward a deeper understanding of the self and reality, involving a spiritual or transpersonal transformation process that changes how a person perceives, understands, and interacts with the world (Arroisi, 2022).

In the context of Sufism, this spiritual journey aims to achieve more profound awareness and togetherness with Allah (SWT), releasing oneself from the tendencies of low desires to get closer to divine qualities. Transpersonal Psychology focuses on expanding consciousness and self-realization beyond the ego towards a higher integration of the personal and universal aspects of existence (Morrissey, 2020).

Surah Al-Hashr (QS 59:19) offers verses that can support this equation in spirituality and psychology, albeit in a more explicitly spiritual context: "*And do not be like those who forget Allah, so Allah makes them forget themselves. These are the wicked people.*" (QS 59:19). This verse emphasizes the importance of remembering Allah (SWT) to avoid "forgetting" yourself. In Sufism, remembering Allah (*Dhikrullah*) is crucial to cleansing the heart and uniting oneself with the Divine will. Meanwhile, in Transpersonal Psychology, reminding oneself of something beyond the individual ego—whether it is called universal consciousness, higher consciousness, or something similar—can lead to a deeper understanding of the self as not separate from the whole of existence.

Thus, within both the Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology frameworks, there is an understanding that purification of the self and expansion of consciousness contributes to a deeper understanding and integration of the broader and more connected aspects of the self, ultimately leading to a fuller and more fulfilling life. Means (Waheed, 2010). The verse invites reflection on how forgetting the source of our consciousness—which in a spiritual context can be interpreted as forgetting God—becomes the cause of our alienation from our authenticity and essence, which is similar to what is studied in Transpersonal Psychology regarding losing contact with the transpersonal aspect of existence (Wilcox, 2020).

## **Integration of Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology**

The integration and interconnection between Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology forms a bridge connecting Islamic spiritual traditions with modern discoveries in the field of psychology. Both are committed to exploring dimensions of human existence that transcend the boundaries of material and egoistic understanding, pushing individuals toward achieving their highest potential through internal transformation. In Sufism, this transformation process is based on self-purification and the search for divine closeness. In contrast, in Transpersonal Psychology, attention focuses on expanding consciousness and transpersonal realization (Agrawal, 2022). However, these two approaches complement and inform each other at their core, demonstrating that proper growth and self-understanding come through exploring inner depths connected to universal qualities (Sotillos, 2022).

Surah Ali 'Imran (QS 3:190-191) offers in-depth views relevant to both disciplines:

*"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for people of understanding, (namely) those who remember Allah while standing or sitting or while lying on their sides. They think about the creation of the heavens and the earth (while saying): "Our Lord, You did not create this in vain. Glory be to You, so protect us from the torment of hell."* (QS 3:190-191). This verse expresses the critical value of reflection and contemplation in understanding a broader reality, recognizing that observing the universe and the passage of time holds profound spiritual and transpersonal lessons. Here, remembering Allah and thinking about His creation increases awareness and appreciation of the intrinsic connection between humans and the cosmos. This concept aligns with the principles of Transpersonal Psychology, which emphasizes the importance of integrating transpersonal experiences with a broader understanding of the self and the universe.

Combining insights from Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology gives us a more holistic and integrative understanding of our search for meaning, purpose, and happiness (Rodriguez, 2024). This perspective facilitates a dialogue between spiritual traditions and modern science that enriches both fields, enabling an approach to life more connected to the self, the universe, and the source of higher spirituality. Thus, these two disciplines, when integrated, offer a path to deep self-understanding and wholeness, creating a foundation for personal transformation and a more inclusive, cross-cultural understanding of human existence.

In the peaceful and spiritual environment of the Al-Huda Islamic Boarding School, Central Lombok, a group of students have begun an in-depth dialogue regarding their experiences in studying and practicing the principles of Sufism and gaining insight from Psychology, especially Transpersonal Psychology.

Wahid, one of the students, shared his experience, *"When I started studying Sufism, I realized that it was not just about studying texts and rituals, but more of an internal journey. I learned that the ego can be the biggest obstacle to achieving spiritual insight."* While Fatimah, another student, added, *"Studying Transpersonal Psychology helped me articulate those experiences with a broader paradigm. I began to understand how the process of internal transformation in Sufism is very similar to what Transpersonal Psychology discusses about the expansion of consciousness."* Another perspectives come from student named Ihsan, *"Harmonizing these two views in everyday life is not easy, but at the same time provides a constructive challenge. I feel more equipped to face inner conflicts and understand the importance of purifying the heart."*

In the discussion, Rasul, a mentor at the Islamic boarding school, gave his views. *"Bringing together the views of Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology in the teaching practices at this Islamic boarding school allows students to explore the spiritual dimension from various perspectives. This opens up space for more inclusive and holistic personal growth, focused on religious fulfilment and a better understanding of the mysteries of humanity and the universe,"* he said. While the discussion continued with Zainab, a student who had previously spent much of her time in formal academic studies, revealing how this experience had broadened her understanding. *"Exploring Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology gave me a new perspective on the importance of balance between intellectual and spiritual development. I began to see that real education can integrate these two aspects,"* said Zainab.

This dialogue becomes more interesting when Ahmad shares his experience of using Sufi meditation (*Muraqaba*) and how this interacts with the psychological understanding of meditation. *"Initially, I saw meditation only as a tool for relaxation. However, through the practice of Muraqaba and the study of consciousness in Transpersonal Psychology, I experienced a more profound transformation"*. Ahmad said enthusiastically that I am more sensitive to my inner dynamics and how this relates to my relationship with Allah.

This talk also highlights how the classical literature of Sufism and current research in Transpersonal Psychology show consistency in their views on consciousness, ego, and self-transformation. *"I was surprised to find how classical Sufis such as Ibn Arabi and Rumi had views that were very similar to what is now studied in Transpersonal Psychology about the structure of consciousness and processes of internal change,"* said Aisyah, a young researcher who has an interest in comparative studies.

As the discussion ended, Rasul emphasized the importance of having the courage to explore and question. *"We must dare to penetrate the boundaries of our knowledge and be open to new possibilities. The integration of Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology here at Pesantren Al-Huda is not only about enriching our academic horizons but also about how we can be more effective in navigating the spiritual journey and our emotions,"* his reflections allow each student to reflect on the practical value of combining the two fields.

The lessons learned from these interviews are invaluable and reflect how the interpretation and application of classical spiritual teachings, such as Sufism, can be enriched with insights from modern psychology. More than that, these talks encourage curiosity and learning that is not limited to texts or theories but is also personal, inner, and connected to broader social and spiritual contexts. This interview bears witness to collective and individual growth in Islamic boarding schools, where a holistic approach to education opens up space for comprehensive and profound transformation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Research and discussions conducted at the Al-Huda Islamic Boarding School in Central Lombok regarding the combination of Sufism and transpersonal psychology made it clear that these two scientific disciplines offer critical and relevant paradigms in facing social and individual challenges in the modern era. These two fields, with different backgrounds and methods, harmoniously converge in the search for the meaning of life, deeper self-understanding, and integration of the spiritual dimension in everyday life. The experiences of students at Islamic boarding schools show that the integration of Sufism and transpersonal psychology allows for more holistic personal growth and provides a valuable perspective in navigating the complexities of humans' relationships with themselves, society, and the universe.

The verse from Surah Ar-Ra'd (QS 13:28) reflects the essence of this discussion: "*People who believe in Allah and their hearts become peaceful by remembering Allah. Remember, only by remembering Allah can the heart become peaceful*". This verse illustrates the vital essence of Sufism and why transpersonal psychology's understanding of the expansion of consciousness can be so helpful. Sufism emphasizes the importance of dhikr (remembering Allah) in achieving inner peace and deeper spiritual awareness. Meanwhile, transpersonal psychology recognizes the importance of spiritual elements for mental health and personal integrity (Bardsley, 2020). The fusion of the traditional wisdom of Sufism and the scientific understanding of transpersonal psychology offers a comprehensive path to addressing humanity's quest for peace, purpose, and a deeper understanding of reality (Arikhah et al., 2022). Thus, this research finds that the synergy between Sufism and transpersonal psychology is vital in facing the modern existential crisis by providing a solid foundation for authentic spiritual exploration and mature psychological understanding. This relationship offers a comprehensive new perspective on human potential for a richer and more meaningful existence, paving the way for individuals to find peace, contentment, and the spiritual depth of unexplored lands in modern life's often materialistic and superficial context.

In conclusion, integrating Sufism and transpersonal psychology enriches the canvas of spiritual and psychological life, offering profound guidance for authentic self-development and expanded consciousness. Through the joint exploration of these two disciplines, individuals can build a bridge between science and spirituality, tapping into the depths of wisdom from both worlds on their journey toward a fuller self-understanding and a more meaningful life.

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### **Author's contribution**

SH and MM contributed to the implementation of the research and the writing of the manuscript.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human and animal subjects.

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### **Data Availability**

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study

### **Disclaimer**

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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