

Bridging Transpersonal Psychology and Islamic Spirituality: A Holistic Approach to Human Spiritual Development

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Abstract: This study explores the convergence of transpersonal psychology and Islamic spiritual traditions, particularly Sufism, in understanding human psychological and spiritual dimensions. Through a qualitative literature analysis, the research examines the fundamental concepts of transpersonal psychology and its remarkable alignment with Islamic spiritual thought. The investigation reveals a profound similarity in approaching human nature as a multidimensional entity encompassing physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects. Key areas of exploration include the development of consciousness, spiritual maqams (spiritual stations), and the concept of self-transcendence. The study demonstrates how both transpersonal psychology and Sufism recognize the importance of spiritual development, emphasizing the transformation of consciousness beyond ego-centric perspectives. By integrating modern psychological insights with Islamic spiritual wisdom, the research offers a comprehensive framework for understanding human potential, spiritual growth, and mental well-being. The findings contribute to a more holistic approach to psychology that acknowledges the significance of spiritual dimensions in human experience and personal development.

Introduction

The development of science in the field of psychology has grown rapidly and dynamically. Until now, various disciplines of psychology have contributed to understanding the nature of humans through various perspectives. The concept of humans itself has been studied by many philosophers and scientists throughout history.¹ Socrates defines humans as social animals,² while Max Schaller said that humans are restless and painful creatures. Other definitions call humans *Homo Sapiens*, *Homo Faber*, *Homo economicus* and *Homo religious*.³ Paulo Freire views humans as creatures who have the potential to develop themselves through education. Meanwhile, in Islamic thought, Ibn Sina stated that human nature consists of the body and *nafs* which always need guidance, while Al-Ghazali emphasized the potential of the *nafs*, spirit, heart and mind which, if guided properly, will make humans civilized and virtuous.⁴

¹ Mahamud Akash et al., "Human Nature and Psychological Insights," *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 7 (January 26, 2019): 2321–9467.

² Linda Wetzel, "Is Socrates Essentially a Man?," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 98, no. 2 (2000): 203–20.

³ Pasiska, "Konsep Manusia Dan Komunikasi Dalam Persepektif Psikologi Transpersonal Dan Islam," *INJECT (Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication)* 3, no. 2 (2018): 273–92.

⁴ Ari Hasan Ansori, "Strategi Peningkatan Sumber Daya Manusia Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Qathruna* 2, no. 2 (2016): 19–56.

The psychological study of human nature has developed through various schools of thought. Existential Psychology developed by Ludwig Binswanger views human existence as encompassing three areas: Umwelt (the environment of objects and things), Mitwelt (the world of connections between humans), and Eigenwelt (self-awareness of one's relationship with oneself). Meanwhile, Positivistic Psychology through Seligman's thinking identifies three ways to achieve happiness: a pleasant life, a good life through full involvement in activities, and a meaningful life through contribution and service to others.⁵ Transpersonal psychology then emerged as the fourth school after psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanism, with a primary focus on the spiritual and transcendental dimensions within humans, which became the main differentiator from previous schools of psychology.⁶

This study aims to reveal more deeply how transpersonal psychology views the concept of human and integrates the spiritual dimension into psychological understanding. In addition, this study also seeks to explore the relevance between the concept of transpersonal psychology and Islamic teachings, especially in the Sufism tradition which has similarities in spiritual and metaphysical approaches. Through this study, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the highest human potential will be formed which includes physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions as a whole. By integrating the perspective of modern psychology and Islamic spiritual wisdom, this study also seeks to contribute to the development of holistic methods of healing mental illness that are in line with religious

values, especially in the context of Muslim society.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of library research that focuses on conceptual analysis of transpersonal psychology and its relevance to Islamic teachings. The method used is a descriptive-analytical method, which is by describing the concept of human beings from the perspective of transpersonal psychology and then analyzing its relationship with the concept of human beings in Islam, especially the Sufism tradition. The primary data sources of the research include the literature on transpersonal psychology by figures such as Abraham Maslow, Robert Frager, and John Davis, as well as the literature on Sufism from Al-Ghazali, Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jauziyyah, and Imam Al-Qusyairy. Secondary data sources are journals, scientific articles, and related research results that support the discussion. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation by identifying, classifying, and categorizing various sources of literature relevant to the research topic. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique uses content analysis with steps of data reduction, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion, as well as a comparative approach to compare the concept of transpersonal psychology with the concepts in Islamic teachings.

Results and Discussion

Basic Concepts of Transpersonal Psychology

Etymologically, transpersonal is a concept that goes beyond the image of a visible human being or in other words beyond the various masks that humans use in their daily lives.

⁵ Paul TP Wong, "What Is Existential Positive Psychology (PP 2.0)? Why Is It Necessary for Mental Health during the Pandemic," *International Journal of Existential Positive Psychology* 10, no. 1 (2021): 1–16.

⁶ Ujam Jaenuddin, *Psikologi Transpersonal* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2012), 162.

According to John Davis, transpersonal psychology can be defined as the science that connects psychology with spirituality which is one of the fields of psychology that integrates psychological concepts, theories, and methods with the spiritual richness of various cultures and religions.⁷ Lajoie and Shapiro define transpersonal psychology as the study of the highest potential of the human being through the recognition, understanding, and realization of the oneness, spirituality, and attachment of various forms of religion.⁸

The pioneering of transpersonal psychology began in the 1960s through research on health psychology conducted by Abraham Maslow. As one of the figures of humanistic psychology, Maslow developed the theory of the hierarchy of human needs, but he realized that there are peak experiences that go beyond self-actualization in the hierarchy. Maslow then identified a higher need that he referred to as 'self-transcendence'. The development of transpersonal psychology became more rapid after the publication of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* in 1969, which marked a new era in which the discipline of psychology began to turn attention to the spiritual dimension of the human being. During this time, research on spiritual phenomena, transpersonal experiences, actualizations, and various spiritual phenomena began to be developed systematically within a scientific framework.⁹

Transpersonal psychology proclaims itself to be the fourth school in psychology after psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanistics. Nevertheless, it can be said that this school is a continuation of the humanistic school, with an

expanded focus on the spiritual dimension. Transpersonal psychology emerged as a response to the limitations of the previous three schools of psychology that were considered to be less attentive to the spiritual aspects of humans. While psychoanalysis focuses on the unconscious and the past, behaviorism on observed behavior and humanism on potential and self-actualization, transpersonal psychology adds a spiritual dimension that goes beyond the individual's ego. Shapiro summarizes various opinions about transpersonal psychology by stating that transpersonal psychology examines the highest potential of human beings and explores, understands, and embodies unity, spirituality, and transcendence consciousness.¹⁰

The main characteristic of transpersonal psychology is the concept of non-duality, which is the knowledge that every part of the human being is part of the whole universe, a cosmic union that sees everything as a whole. Transpersonal psychology focuses more on the spiritual or transcendental aspects of human beings and this is what distinguishes it from humanistic psychology. McT Waters created a circular diagram that illustrates that each circle represents one level of human functioning and a level of human self-awareness. In the study of transpersonal psychology, the highest potential of the individual is found in the non-physical spiritual world which is shown through various experiences such as the ability to see the future, mystical experiences, the development of spirituality, peak experiences, meditation, and various phenomena that are parapsychological or metaphysical.¹¹

⁷ Ujam Jaenuddin, *Psikologi Transpersonal*, 25.

⁸ A Nurdin Ady, "Psikologi Transpersonal Konsep Dan Implementasinya Terhadap Pendidikan Dan Globalisasi," *Al 'Ulum* 54, no. 4 (2012): 37–43.

⁹ Albert Garcia-Romeu, "Self-Transcendence as a Measurable Transpersonal Construct," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2010): 26–47.

¹⁰ Glenn Hartelius, "Transpersonal Is a Whole Person Psychology: Editor's Introduction," *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 35 (July 1, 2016): iii–vi, doi:10.24972/ijts.2016.35.2.iii.

¹¹ Alexandra Kitson et al., "A Review on Research and Evaluation Methods for Investigating Self-

Human Concept in Transpersonal Psychology Perspective

Transpersonal psychology looks at humans holistically, taking into account the complete unity between the physical, psychic, and spiritual dimensions. In contrast to the previous school of psychology which tends to reduce humans to purely physical and psychological aspects, transpersonal psychology emphasizes that humans cannot be understood in their entirety without involving the spiritual dimension. This holistic approach recognizes that human experience transcends ego boundaries and penetrates into the broader realm of collective consciousness and spirituality. In this view, human beings are not only purely biological or psychological entities, but also spiritual entities connected to a greater and transcendent reality.¹²

In understanding human psychological dynamics, transpersonal psychology proposes four basic concepts. First, instinct as the initial energy or force that drives individuals to act in a certain way, is an inherited behavior from birth and not acquired from experience or learning. Second, the need is a desire to meet the shortcomings felt by individuals, both from physiological and psychological aspects. Third, urging as an action or behavior change due to unmet physiological needs, is a tendency to maintain a balance of physiological conditions such as hunger and thirst. Fourth, motivation as a stimulant that arouses and sustains an individual's interest in achieving a certain attitude, including changing attitudes, interests, and behaviors. These four concepts are realized because there are physiological or psychological needs that must be met.¹³

The spiritual and transcendental dimension in humans is the main focus of transpersonal psychology. This school believes that spiritual experience is not just an ordinary psychological phenomenon, but a fundamental aspect of human existence. Experiences such as cosmic consciousness, peak experiences, expanded consciousness, and feelings of unity with the universe are considered manifestations of the spiritual dimension of man. Transpersonal psychology also recognizes the existence of levels of consciousness that go beyond ordinary awareness, including awareness that can be achieved through meditation, contemplation, and other spiritual practices.

McT Waters modeled the levels of human self-consciousness in the form of concentric circle diagrams, where each circle represents one level of human function and consciousness, from the outermost physical consciousness to the deepest spiritual consciousness. This model illustrates that the highest potential of man lies in the spiritual dimension that is non-physical. In the study of transpersonal psychology, this highest potential can be realized through various transcendental experiences, such as extrasensory perception (ESP) abilities, mystical experiences, the development of spirituality, and meditation. This view changes the conventional paradigm by asserting that humans are spiritual beings who have human experiences, not the other way around. By realizing and developing this spiritual dimension, humans can reach a higher level of consciousness and experience oneness with a

Transcendence," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11, no. November (2020): 1–27, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.547687.

¹² Sri Haryanto and Hendriyadi Bahtiar Daeng Sila, "Integration and Interconnection of Human Concepts in Islamic and Transpersonal Psychology," *International*

Journal of Islamic Educational Psychology 3, no. 1 (2022): 45–57, doi:10.18196/ijiep.v3i1.14593.

¹³ Transpersonal Motivation, "CHAPTER 7 – Transpersonal Motivation and Emotion," no. January 2014 (2017), doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.13941.78562.

greater reality, which is the main goal in transpersonal development.¹⁴

The Relevance of Transpersonal Psychology to Islamic Teachings

Robert Felder, a Sufi mystic and professor of psychology at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in California, has conducted an in-depth comparative study of Western psychology and Sufi psychology. Frager explained that Sufism is a holistic approach that integrates the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of humans. In his analysis, he emphasized that Sufism guides the soul not to be trapped in the dangers of linear and hierarchical models that tend to exclude and justify the oppression of certain groups. In contrast to Western psychology which often reduces spiritual experience as a psychological phenomenon, Sufi psychology recognizes the validity and significance of the spiritual dimension as a fundamental aspect in the understanding of human beings. Frager also emphasized that Sufism is a universal discipline of spiritual knowledge, which can be possessed by all cultures, anyone, anytime, and anywhere.¹⁵

Sufism as an aspect of mysticism in Islam is essentially the awareness of the communication relationship between humans and their God, which then gives birth to a sense of closeness to God. This relationship is interpreted through man's spiritual experience with his God which results in an awareness of God's presence in daily life. The Sufism approach integrates the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of human beings into a whole, very similar to the holistic view embraced by transpersonal psychology. Both recognize that human reality is not limited to physical and

psychological phenomena, but also encompasses the deeper and transcendent spiritual dimension that is the essence of human existence.¹⁶

The awareness of the communication relationship between man and God in Islam begins from the moment man is in the mother's womb, through the primordial covenant between God and man. As mentioned in the Qur'an Surah Al-A'raf verse 172 which means: *"And (remember), when your Lord brought out the offspring of the sons of Adam from their sulbi and Allah took testimony against their souls (saying): 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied: 'Indeed (You are our Lord), we are witnesses'. (We do this) so that on the Day of Resurrection you will not say: 'Surely we (the children of Adam) are the ones who are careless about this (the oneness of God).'"* This verse shows that spiritual awareness and relationship with God have been embedded in human nature since creation. This concept is in line with the view of transpersonal psychology which recognizes the existence of an inherent spiritual dimension in human beings.

The ultimate goal of Sufism is to draw closer to Allah to seek His pleasure through spiritual practices aimed at purifying the soul and forming good morals. The principles of Sufism taught by the Prophet include living simply, not being excessive, being grateful, and being humble. Efforts to draw closer to Allah in the Sufi tradition are carried out through maqams (spiritual stations) such as zuhud (asceticism), wara' (caution), taubat (repentance), raja' (hope), khauf (fear), sabar (patience), until reaching the highest peak, namely ma'rifat (spiritual knowledge), and even to fana (self-merging) with God. These principles are in harmony with transpersonal psychology which also emphasizes the importance of spiritual development through

¹⁴ H. Leslie Steeves, "Spirituality and Development," *The International Encyclopedia of Communication* 31, no. 1 (2008): 1–10, doi:10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecs091.

¹⁵ Jaenuddin, *Psikologi Transpersonal*, 162.

¹⁶ Thobib Al-asyhar, "Dimensi Holistik Psikologi Sufi : Studi Perbandingan Psikologi," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 17, no. 2 (2024): 248–78.

certain stages to achieve the highest human potential and the experience of oneness with a greater reality.

Spiritual Maqam in Sufism and Its Relevance to Transpersonal Psychology

In the Sufism tradition, a Sufi's spiritual journey towards closeness to Allah is marked by a series of maqam (spiritual stations) that must be passed gradually.

The first maqam is Repentance which according to Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jauziyyah is defined as the return of a servant to Allah by leaving the path of those who are angry with Allah. Repentance is not just repentance, but a commitment not to repeat sinful deeds and to strive to improve oneself with good behaviors.¹⁷ As mentioned in the Qur'an Surah Al-Maidah verse 39: *"Whoever repents (among the thieves) after committing the evil and correcting himself, then surely Allah accepts his repentance. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."* From a transpersonal psychological perspective, repentance can be analogized to a process of consciousness transformation that involves acknowledging the limitations of the ego and opening oneself to a higher spiritual dimension.

Maqam Zuhud which means abandoning attachment to worldly things to get closer to Allah. Al-Ghazali explained that zuhud is not a total rejection of the world, but rather an attitude of not depending on the world and realizing that worldly glitter can distance man from his God.¹⁸

Maqam Patience which is the ability to restrain oneself in carrying suffering, accepting duties in the form of commands and

prohibitions, and an attitude to face disasters.¹⁹ As mentioned in the Qur'an surah Hud verse 39: *"So be patient; Indeed, the end is good for the righteous."* The concept of patience in Sufism is in line with the concept of spiritual resilience in transpersonal psychology, which emphasizes the ability of the individual to face difficulties while maintaining spiritual awareness.

Maqam Tawakal is surrender to Allah after making earnest efforts, doing all forms of struggle in accordance with Allah's commands, and leaving the results only to Allah. Imam Al-Qusyairy emphasized that tawakal is not a passive attitude, but a balance between optimal effort and total surrender to the will of Allah.²⁰

Maqam Ridha is the peak of a Sufi love that has been obtained after undergoing long devotion to Allah. Ridha is a gift given for maximum effort in devotion and munajat, a manifestation of pious deeds that have been carried out. In transpersonal psychology, this concept is similar to the peak experience described by Maslow in which individuals experience moments of supreme happiness, harmony, and deep acceptance of all aspects of life.

Maqam Mahabbah literally means love and affection, it is an effort to realize a deep love for Allah SWT. Imam Al-Qusyairy described it as an overflow and turmoil of the heart that longed for an encounter with the Beloved, namely Allah. This true love leads a person to divine pleasure, with the characteristics of liking obedience to God, hating the attitude against Him, and

¹⁷ Martyrdom and Zulkiram, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Repentance as Eliminating the Punishment for Adultery," *Legitimation: Journal of Criminal Law and Political Law* 10, no. 2 (2021): 189–216.

¹⁸ Ahmad Wafi Nur Sasfaat and Eko Zulfikar, "The Concept of Zuhud in the Modern Era: A Study of Hamka's Interpretation in the Book of Tafsir Al-Azhar," *SINDA: Comprehensive Journal of Islamic Social Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021): 23–31.

¹⁹ Pasiska, "Human Concepts and Communication in the Perspective of Transpersonal and Islamic Psychology."

²⁰ Siti Nurkhaifah Marisa Akhdiat and Muhammad Faisal, "Maqam Tawakkal in the Qur'an (A Study of the Perspective of Imam Alusi in Tafsir Ruhul Ma'ani Fi Tafsir Alquran Al-'Azim wa Sab'I Al-Matsani)," *Basha'ir: Journal of Qur'an Studies and Tafsir* 1, no. 2 (2021): 117–34.

emptying the heart of everything except that of the Beloved.

Maqam Ma'rifat which in Sufism is often interpreted as a call to the heart through tafakur to appreciate the values of longing that arise from dhikr activities. At this level, a Sufi feels the presence of Allah in every aspect of his life, until when he sees the universe, all that is seen is the greatness of Allah. In transpersonal psychology, this can be equated with cosmic consciousness or nondual consciousness, in which the boundaries of the ego merge and the individual experiences unity with the greater reality, which is the main goal of transpersonal development.

Aspects of Psychotherapy in Transpersonal and Islamic Psychology

The concept of self or nafs in Sufi psychology is the first psychic aspect that is the main challenge in the spiritual journey. Nafs has several levels that describe a person's spiritual development. The lowest level is the tyrannical nafs (nafs al-ammarah), which tends to distance people from spirituality and encourage worldly pleasures. The intermediate level includes regretful nafs that begin to have moral awareness, and inspired nafs that begin to open up to divine guidance. The highest level is the calm nafs, the happy nafs, the saffed nafs, and the culmination of the holy nafs. At this highest level, the personality reaches an optimal level that can reflect divine light. This cascading concept is in line with the transpersonal psychology view of the development of consciousness that moves from ego-centric consciousness to transpersonal consciousness.

The process of self-actualization in the Sufi tradition leads to the effort to get closer to God through the development of positive potential and the control of negative aspects within oneself. According to Sufi psychology, if man wants to actualize himself to always be close to God, he must use his positive potential to do good and distance himself from negative things.

In essence, humans must always present God in themselves, so that their behavior is always decorated by charitable deeds. This process has an alignment with the concept of self-transcendence in transpersonal psychology in which the individual moves beyond the interests of the ego towards a broader consciousness and is connected to the spiritual dimension. Both traditions emphasize the importance of the transformation of consciousness and the integration of spiritual aspects in human development.

The soul in Sufi psychology is seen as an ever-evolving entity and has seven aspects, namely mineral, vegetable, animal, personal, human, secret, and omni-secret. The mineral aspect reflects the physical nature; the vegetable aspect is related to growth and development; the animal aspect is related to impulses and instincts; the personal aspect relates to identity and ego; the human aspect reflects humanity and empathy; the secret aspect indicates a spiritual connection with God; and the Secret aspect represents the highest level of spiritual consciousness. These seven aspects of the soul can be achieved gradually, and Sufism aims for all of these levels of consciousness to work in a balanced and harmonious manner. This multi-dimensional concept of the soul has parallels with the spectrum of consciousness model in transpersonal psychology developed by Ken Wilber, which also describes the development of consciousness from the material to the spiritual level.

Islam offers a variety of methods of spiritual psychotherapy for the healing of mental illnesses. Prayer as a five-time obligatory worship is not only a ritual obligation, but also a means to create peace of mind through regular connection with God. Fasting trains self-control and awareness of God's presence in every aspect of life. Dhikr (remembering Allah) that is done consistently makes the heart and soul calm, as

mentioned in the Qur'an: "*Remember, only by remembering Allah the heart becomes at peace*" (QS. Ar-Ra'd: 28). Prayer is a means of direct communication with God, allowing a person to express one's heart and pour out one's troubles, which has a therapeutic effect through the belief that God will help solve problems. Allah said: "*Pray to Me, and I will grant it to you*" (QS. Al-Ghafir: 60). Hajj as the peak worship in Islam also has a therapeutic dimension through a process of self-purification and intense collective spiritual experiences.

The effectiveness of spiritual practice in creating peace of mind has been proven not only through the subjective experiences of spiritual practitioners, but also through various empirical studies in transpersonal psychology. The method of strengthening the spiritual dimension in Islam is carried out through three stages: instilling faith and monotheism as the foundation, directing life goals oriented to spiritual values, and carrying out the worships that are sharia in religion consistently. When these stages are carried out properly, a stable and healthy personality will be formed, which ultimately leads a person to happiness and mental health, and even being able to develop one's potential optimally. The approach to psychotherapy in transpersonal psychology and the Islamic Sufi tradition both emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual aspects in the process of healing and psychological growth, which offers an alternative to complementing conventional psychotherapeutic approaches that tend to focus only on the physiological and psychological dimensions.

Conclusion

The comparative study of transpersonal psychology and Islamic spiritual traditions reveals a profound convergence in understanding human nature and spiritual development. Both approaches transcend

reductive psychological models by recognizing humans as multidimensional beings with intrinsic spiritual potential. Transpersonal psychology and Sufism share critical insights: the importance of consciousness transformation, the existence of multiple levels of awareness, and the significance of spiritual practices in personal growth. The research highlights that spiritual development is not merely a psychological phenomenon but a fundamental aspect of human existence. The journey of self-actualization in both traditions involves moving beyond ego-centric consciousness towards a broader, more interconnected understanding of reality. Spiritual practices, whether through meditation in transpersonal psychology or through Islamic spiritual stations (maqams), serve as transformative tools for personal and spiritual evolution. The study demonstrates that integrating spiritual dimensions into psychological understanding offers a more comprehensive approach to mental health and human potential. By recognizing the spiritual aspect of human experience, we can develop more holistic methods of healing, personal growth, and self-understanding that respect both scientific and spiritual perspectives. This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of human psychology by bridging modern psychological theories with ancient spiritual wisdom, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive view of human nature and potential.

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