Impact of Sufism on Pakistani society in the 21st Century: A Grounded Theory

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Abstract

Sufism is an esoteric school of Islam that developed in the early era of Islamic history, even during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, with the objective of spiritual instruction and self-purification. This study examined the impact of Sufism in our society in present days qualitative study design was used and Grounded Theory (GT) was used for coding the data and developing the therapeutic model. Focus group discussion was used to gather information about how Sufism has psychological impacts in our daily routine matters and how much Sufism is embedded in our society. Focus group was conducted on four students of B.A/ B.Sc. (Hons.) final semester and four scholarly teacher of Government College University Lahore who have knowledge about Sufism and also personally experience the impacts of Sufism. Theoretical model which developed by using GT method is identified the social, psychological, spiritual and political impact of Sufism on Pakistani society in 21st century.

Keywords: Sufism, Pakistan, 21st Century, Mysticism, Grounded Theory (GT), psychological impact, spirituality, qualitative study.

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1. Introduction

Sufism is a spiritual phenomenon. It has deep roots in our society in its multiple dimensions. Even in this age of reason we cannot negate the fact of spirituality. Freud, father of modern psychology and founder of psychoanalysis call the religion as an illusion and moreover he said religion is nothing but psychology projected into the eternal world (Kim, 2020). Its theoretical perspective might be applicable in Freudian culture but due to cultural differential, it might not be valid in Asia especially in Pakistan where people cannot negate the religion. As in Asian culture Sufi psychotherapy uses to cure the mentally disturbed people (Ishmah, 2020). Dr. Ajmal define the Sufi psychotherapy as a mode of psychological treatment which is based upon such a metaphysics which embodies Islamic tradition in sense (Harel et al., 2021). In 21st century Sufism has strong influence on modern mind, all problem of modern man originate due to the loss of its origin and Sufism helps it to budge towards its origin. Sufi (man of God) shown the course of how to proceed towards actual being. This study helps us to explore how non-scientific phenomena help the scientific psychological issues. Why psychology stay as thunderstruck in its some areas especially when it applies in Asian cultures (Aliyah & Supriyadi, 2018).

Sufism is thus something the denotation of religion more than others. It knows about the mysteries of the creation of the man and universe, and the Creator (Ali, 2019). Martin Lings considers Revelation a wave flowing from the infinitude ocean of eternity which comes from the timeless to this temporal world and Sufism is that state which enables the Sufi to ebb with some part of that flow of the revelation; from time to time a revelation flow like a great tidal wave from the ocean of infinitude to the shores of our finite world, and Sufism is the vocation and the discipline and the science of plunging into ebb of one of this wave and being drawn back with it to its eternal and infinite. Source Lings explains further that people question the ebbing of the Sufi that what and how the Sufi ebbs toward the eternity. Lings answers that only after the first stage that is resurrection, the body of the Sufi can ebb and the soul ebbs after the death of the Sufi (Aliyah & Supriyadi, 2018). Imam Ghazali also explained this phenomena that body has ebbed but soul is captivated in the cage of the body and would fly after his death. The stages of becoming the Sufi and ebbing toward the source are the center of conscience of the Sufis (Zaini, 2016).

There are various interpretations regarding the meaning of word Sufi. First time this word use for those people who took stand for the right against the evils of the time (Faruque, 2021). Another interpretation is in book of Hazrat Ali-bin-Usman Alhajware, Kashaf-ul-Majob this word trace its origin from word Soo' which means wool. Sufi wears the rag of woolen which is symbol of humiliation (Coppens, 2018). A renowned historian Abul Fida believes that Ashabi-safa called Sufi because they were stayed in one sufa of Masjid-e-Nabwie. They cut from material world and devoted themselves completely for Allah Almighty. Some scholars believe that this come from word Suff, a row, Sufi will stand in the first row in the Day of Judgment. A further origin is from the Greek, Sophia which signifies the wisdom. But in Quran these people call very in their own way by terms: Sabirin (patient men), Abrar (virtuous men), Zuhhad (pious men) (Melchert, 2016).

Sufi is someone who understands religion more than an ordinary follower of Islam. A Sufi has been defined in various ways by well-known Islamic authorities. Sufi is a Muslim who seek close, direct and personal experience of God, and who are often, therefore, described as
mystics. Man is the mystery of God. For mysterious purpose, man was outwardly created of clay and God breathed life into him (Sidik, 2018). Hazrat Abu ul Hason said Tassawuf is the renunciation of the desires of Nafs. Dhun Nun Misri define the Sufi as one whose accords with his behavior and whose silence indicates his state and who discard worldly connection (Arifah, 2018). There is number of researches, books, articles on the topic of Sufism in field of Islamic and social sciences. Past researches and studies shows that history of Sufism, origin of Sufism, silsalay (orders) in Sufism, practices of Sufism, Sufi traditions, Sufi culture, Sufism and Islam and political influences on Sufism. But there is need to investigate the psychological impacts of Sufism in present days in our society. Secondly there is need to draw line between the meanings of Sufism for common man and for Sufi.

2. Literature review

Whenever we talk about Sufism in subcontinent generally and in Pakistan particularly, we find its origin from the fertile land of Persia. So first to know about the Persian Sufism would help to trace the Sufi movements in the subcontinent. The rich Persian Sufi literature and culture was so dynamic and grand in its nature that it was once considered as one of the main homelands of the early Sufism, and like a fountain also irrigated the adjacent lands. The influence of Persian Sufism extended from present day Pakistan up through central Asia into the Turkic part of the northern lands of Persia, that is to say, Khurasan and upper Transoxiana, which today comprise the newly independent countries of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and part of southern central Kazakhstan (Andrabi, 2015). There were two schools of Sufism of Khurasan and Baghdad. The former believed in intoxication and the later in sobriety. Abu Baker Shibli, the pious woman of Basra Rabi `a al- `Adawiyya, Abu’ I Qasim al-Junayel and Hasan al-Basr, all belonged to the Baghdadian Sufis. Mansur Hallaj belonged also to the Baghdadian school of thought (Algar, 2018). The Arabic literature on the contrary did not take any influence from this cultural movement though the origin of Sufi literature emanated from the Arabic language of the Holy Quran and Hadith. Many Persian Sufis also wrote poetry in Arabic literature like Imam Ghazali, Abu Baker Shibli and Mansoor Hallaj. But instead of all these facts, Sufi literature in Persian spread throughout the Islamic world and shaped the spiritual identity of the people assembling under the new emerging Ottoman civilization. Jalal ud din Rumi who was from present day Turkey, also wrote in Persian, and became a common symbol of Sufism not only in Turkey and Persia but also in the whole Islamic world where Persian could be understood (Algar, 2018).

The land of South Asia and India could also not help taking influence of these grandiose Sufi movements. Persian language was the official language of India and in the reign of Akbar the Great Sufism along with the Bukti movement flourished throughout the Indian region (Murphy, 2016). A great name of Shah Khalilullah, in the 15th century is also very important as far as the spread of Sufism in the subcontinent is concerned. He was the son of Shah Ni`matullah, and his progeny commenced the Ni`matullahi order in Deccan. They were the Persian speaking people and so ultimately they not only preached in Persian language but also publicized Persian culture. The language of Urdu was adopted for the literary expression in the 18th century after Shah Waliullah which later became the symbol of Islamic civilization in India (Huda, 2021). The traces of the Sufism in subcontinent are very deep in the soil of this region. Before Muhammad Bin Qasim in 8th century, the Sufis and the Muslim scholars use to come to India for the purpose of the spread of Islam. In present day Srilanka, the Arab traders were used to come even before the advent of Islam. After the spread of Islam in Arab the Muslim traders
found their ways throughout the world and also became the flag bearers of their religion and preached it wherever they went. The present day Bangladesh and many other coastal areas like Srilanka in the South Asia were the first ones which were fertilized for the spread of Islam by the Muslim scholars and Sufis. The Sufis and the Muslim Ulama traced their way toward the subcontinent through the Muslim traders. This was the first form of interaction of Sufism to the South Asian land (Syatori, 2019; Khan & Bano, 2020).

After Muhammad Bin Qasim, the Muslim warriors started to come intermittently. Many dynasties found the time to rule over the land of India. The activities of the Muslim scholars on the other hand were very nonpolitical. They preached the values of Islam very politely and were successful in their mission to bring the creation of Allah to the light of the Right from the darkness of the ignorance. They, although some of the Sufis remained indifferent of the Muslim invaders, rulers and warriors but time by time some of them were the ones who also guided the Muslim rulers to adopt the appropriate ways of governance for the wellbeing of both Islam and the whole mankind (Afrianti, 2016). The first lesson of these Sufis was tolerance, brotherhood and respect of the humanity. So many people were attracted to them and massively started to embrace Islam. Chistiya, Suhrwadiya, Qadriya and Naqshbandiya are the four major schools of thought that spread four different ways of meeting the same goal. Mueen ud Din Chishti Ajmeri, Beha ud Din Zakria Multani, Ali Bin Usman Hajweri, and many other respectable saints came to India and devoted their lives for the Right. The Chistiya school of thought was named after the respectable saint of Mueen ud Din Chishti Ajmeri, and the Qaderiya was after Abd ul Qadir Gilani. The latter belonged to Persia but his followers came to India and preached this school of thought (Sedgwick, 2018). The center of the Suhrwadiya school of thought was Multan, but the people of Sindh, Punjab, the present day India, Balochistan, even Afghanistan widely took influence of the this chain. Outch became the second center of influence of this ideology because of the services of the Makhdoom Jahanian Jehan Gashat. Ajmer, Pakpatan, and Delhi were the centers of influence of the Chishtiyah silsilah, and many saints of this school gave services in these areas. Mainly Outch was the center of the Qadriyah chain but it also extended in Punjab and Sindh.

The Naqshbendiya silsilah started in Serhind but later it swelled throughout the subcontinent and even in the whole Arab afterwards. Sayyed Ali Shah Hamdni is a prominent name as far as the extension of Islam and Sufi values are concerned (Ishmah, 2020). Ghoth Beha ud Din Zakria Multani reformed and renewed the believes of the people of the Sindh and Multan and many Ishmaelites, and Quarantines returned to the true spirit of Islam and so the people became Sunnis and active participants for the welfare of Islam (Wulandari, 2017). Many of these Sufis and scholars directly challenged the nasty, malicious and repulsive authorities of their times and didn’t reluctant even for a single moment to say the Right before them. The Chistiah silsila abhorred to go to the courts while the scholars of the Suhrwardia, Qadria, and Naqshbendiya chains remained active for the political, social, economic, and moral reforms of the Muslims of the subcontinent. Many Muslim rulers took influence of these Sufis and implemented Shari’a for the Muslim masses. The Chistiah chain though remained apparently unconcerned of the court activities but they were fully aware of the inclinations of their rulers and kept them up to date with the current affairs. Shah Fakhur din is an important name in this context that changed the views and interests of the king of his times and made him aware of the deteriorating and worsening condition of that time (Rakhmananova, 2020).
Psychology and Sufism are interlinked. Psychology is the science of soul/Mind. It focuses on
the mind and examines the mental instrument with which man is bested whereas *Sufism* defines
the forces which guided and direct to manipulate these instruments. Mind that controls the
spiritual aspects of the personality and the former is something extremely limitless. Mind and
many of its other tools control the tasks of the whole body, but spirituality is something that
even helps those tools to function properly, and guides the man to approach his final destiny.
The soul has three phases. They explain the three phases of soul that are *Nafs*, which is selfish
and lustful self, *Qalb*, which is intelligent and bright self and *Ruh*, which is spiritual and
intuitional self. *Nafs* is the ego of Freud which works on the pleasure principle; *Nafs* is a
negative force which binds us with the physical existence. *Nafs* works on two planes one is
physical which consists of our body desires like hunger, comfort, sexual pleasure etc. And
second is mental plane it consistence of urge for self-preservation and covert itself in the greedy
spirit with the help of two forces of jealous and predetermines (Homerin, 2017).

In Sufism the basic principle of the spirit is that man is composed of two things first matter
and the other spirit. The body belongs to matter and spirit belongs to God. Ultimately the
connection of man and God is as essential as is the relation between the body and the spirit.
The concept of soul is related to the moral hierarchy of man. It means that it is very important
in making the man a moral entity and the basic dynamic force of his motives or behaviors. This
is also the way of the development of the delft or personality. As, a man controls how to follow
the right and how to avoid the wrong. To many Sufis it is called *Tazkiyyah* as the soul is purified
through this process of self-control. It also means that the right in man is swelled overly to the
extent that it overwhelms the evil forces which are given impetus by naïfs. Carl Roger calls it
the “the becoming of a person” (Chaudhry, 2008).

3. **Theoretical framework**

Sufism has a lasting effect on South Asian religious, cultural, and social life. The continuous
work of Sufi preachers helps explain Islam’s vast geographic presence in subcontinent. Sufi
academics from all across continental Asia were vital and influential in the social, economic, and philosophical development of
civilization. In addition to preaching in large towns and intellectual centers, Sufis went out to
poor and disenfranchised rural populations, preaching in local languages such as Urdu, Sindhi,
and Punjabi as opposed to Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. Sufism arose as a “moral and
comprehensive socio-religious force” influencing other religious traditions such as Hinduism.
Their spiritual rituals and simple way of life drew individuals from all walks of life. Today,
mystical stories and folk songs surround their lessons of humanity, love for God, and Prophet.
Sufis were adamant about avoiding religious and communal conflict and aspired to be peaceful
members of civic society. Furthermore, it is Sufism's attitude of tolerance, adaptation, piety,
and charisma that has allowed it to remain a cornerstone of mystical Islam in subcontinent. The
modem institutions either political or economic challenged the old structures of Sufism and the
configuration of the Muslim states and called for to need to revive all the foundations of Sufi
order and the composition of typical Muslim states. The Muslims and the Sufis of the modem
era faced the modem invasion of western modernity with all its components of modem
democratic features, economic ideologies, modem discourse of education with the
advancements in science and a need to progress in all the fields of knowledge with scientific
methods and techniques, nationalism and as a result limitations or gradual corrosion of the universal concept of brotherhood among the Muslims, the evolution of the typical arrangement of the institution of family that threatened conventional model of family life in the Muslim societies, the rise of the middle class, urbanization, mobilization and experienced all those political, economic and social transformations of the Western societies that they experienced at the time of industrialization.

These changes came very late in the Muslim societies, as they repelled these modern revolutions considering them a threat to the Islamic conventions and set of beliefs. And the western societies had gone through these transformations at the cost of the liberations of these Muslim regions in the name of colonialization. The field of technology in these western regions took advanced steps in an era when these Muslim regions were subjected to them and their economic or intellectual growth was hindered by the western masters or authorities. As a result this process of modernization was not accepted by the Muslim societies or the Sufi orders also because of the fact that they were considered part and parcel of colonization and the other ways of subjugation. Many Muslim societies did not accept modernism also because its torchbearers were their old rivals on whom they had the upper hand once in the field of learning and were more advanced and prosperous than these Crusaders. Besides, capitalism and the issues of interest initiated a series of conflicting arguments of the Muslim scholars. The Muslim traditions were also felt in danger zone and the problems of accommodation of the religious beliefs and rituals became an issue in a new social and economic set up where the advancements were demanding the rapid growth of thought and intellect. In this prospect of rapidly changing scenario on worldly level and the establishment of different international organizations, after the world war one and different movements of these western countries like feminism, human rights and many others also affected the thought of the Muslim world. So, gender equality, women suffrage, the active participation of Muslim women in social and economic spheres. The difference between the modern reformers of the Muslim societies and the Sufis was also not settled (Kim, 2020).

4. Research methodology

Research design qualitative method was used. Data was collected through focus group discussion technique. Participants Focus group consist of eight participant who have deep knowledge about Sufism and also personally experience the impacts of Sufism in their personal lives, in which four were student of final semester of BA/B.Sc (hons) and other four were scholarly teacher of GC University, Lahore. Focus groups are used to explore the perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, and proposal. Participants are free to talk with other group members, with minimum questions asked.

Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where Group discussion produces data and insights that would be less easy to get to without interaction found in a group setting, listening to others stimulates memories, ideas, and experiences in participants. The data was collected from four students of final semester and four scholars of GC University, Lahore who participated in focus group discussion. The data about psychological impact of Sufism in present days in Pakistan was gathered through focus group discussion in which some question give the participants for discussion. Data collected through focus group was analyzed using
5. Data analysis

To analysis the data GT was used. GT is a systematic analysis tool which is frequently used in social sciences. GT works almost in reverse manner from conventional research. Instead of starting with designing and researching hypotheses, in GT we start with collection of data. Codes are assigned to the collected text or data to main points. Then categories are formed from these codes to make them more workable. The hypotheses are formed by these categories which are backbone of theory development. Table-1 shows the result that Sufi remain away from matter and actualizing the self. Sufi has its own sociological position. Sufi is enriching in local wisdom but not scientific. Sufi use the technique of catharsis in better way. People perceive Sufi with Karamat. Sufi is just Spiritual guide. The meaning of Sufism are different for common man and follower.

Table-1: Major and sub category developed through axial coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Category</th>
<th>Sub Category</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-purification</td>
<td>Self-cleansing</td>
<td>Away from matter and actualizing the self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Removes contradictions from heart and mind</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obtain Nafs-e Mutmainna</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enlighten heart</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Degrading body</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Impact of Sufism</td>
<td>Social Reformer</td>
<td>Political Position of Sufism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shrines retain political influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movements</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Langer, Nayaz (free distribution of food)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social linkage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sufi's awareness and knowledge about society</td>
<td>Local wisdom</td>
<td>Sufi is enrich in local wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of area</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Way of thinking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Simple life style</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs of life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Command on general issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Services</td>
<td>Identification of problem</td>
<td>Sufi use the technique of catharsis in more better way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solution of problems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Association with problem</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not professional</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure participation of patient</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Impact</td>
<td>True Predictions</td>
<td>People perceive Sufi with Karamat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dum Darod</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unusual events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Showing some powers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Acceptance of Pray</td>
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<td></td>
<td>True dreams</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure-1 illustrated that through the analysis of qualitative data a model of psychological impact of Sufism in 21st century in Pakistan was developed. The result shows that four major psychological impact of Sufism in the domain of psychological healing through spirituality. Model of psychological impact indicates the major impacts related to identification of problems, providing solutions of problems, used technique of catharsis and spiritual therapeutic techniques.

Figure-1: A model of impact of Sufism 21st century in Pakistan

6. Discussion

This study examines the psychological impacts of Sufism in our society in this modern age. The most of people of this society in Pakistan not only believe in religion but also seek spiritual satisfaction through some supernatural or mystic practices. Before talking about the Sufism and its psychological impacts. We must consider Pakistani culture and psyche of its inhabitants. It must be made clear here that Pakistani people, although, now on the globe are recognized as
Muslims and religious but culturally their believes and dogmas can be traced back to the traditions and rituals of sub-continent culture (Alam, 2014). The role of Two Nation Theory and Islamization during Zia regime cannot be ignored for this global repute. But talking about the Indian culture of which Pakistani culture has been a part for several years with minute differences, the respect for Sufism and its acceptance as a spiritual authority is very obvious (Khan, 2020).

Many research works have been carried out concerning Sufism but their primary interest has been the origin and history of Sufism or the other cultural and political issues linked with Sufism. One may also find a lot of work carried on the discourse of Sufism. No substantial research work is done to study the impacts of Sufism in psychological problem solving except the efforts of Dr. Ajmal who introduced the Sufi Psychotherapy in the field of psychology. He defines Sufi Psychotherapy in this way. Sufi Psychotherapy is, however, a mode of psychological treatment which is based upon such a metaphysics which embodies Islamic tradition (Harel et al., 2021). His work, Sufi Psychotherapy, is indeed a great contribution in the field of psychology and it helps in conducting further research in this context. His Sufi Psychotherapy indicates the need of Sufi psychology in our society. This research presses on the need of Sufi Psychology because psychology as a pure branch of science originated from the West. The tools, techniques, methods and other therapeutic techniques it adopts, are more applicable in Western culture than Asian culture. Now it has become evident that our psychological problems and issues are linked to and affected by our cultural setting (Ismail et al., 2021). Therefore, there is a need of "Sufi Psychology" that may help in solving the psychological problems of our society that emerge in a particular cultural setting. The qualitative analysis of this study indicates that identification of the problem, solution of the problem, free catharsis, psychological support and the altruistic behavior of the Sufi are those factors that may make the Sufi Psychology possible and considerable. These factors are similar with the finding of previous study (Dincer, 2016).

This research also helped in clarifying some other concepts that were not sufficiently explained before. As the meaning of Sufi is different for a common man and a man who is part of a particular Silsila in Sufism. A common man goes to a Sufi or to a shrine for fulfilling the his worldly and material needs and desires but a man who belongs a particular Silsila of Sufism takes the Sufi practices as a means to gain the love of God. It is also worth mentioning here that a Sufi in 21st century is affiliated with the shrine and all affairs that belong to the premises of that shrine: he might be Gaddi Nasheen or Sajjada Nasheen of that shrine. These results are evident with the literature (Wright, 2021). Another important thing about the problem solving method of the Sufi is this that he does not necessarily solve the problem according to the wish of the man who comes for solution there. Rather he may inculcate a positive and optimistic acceptance of the facts that do not conform to his wishes or desires. The reason behind the convincing power of Sufi and his ability for a free catharsis is his rich local knowledge. However, the one thing Sufi lacks in is the scientific knowledge. But his deep insight into the human nature, universe and the relationship of between these two enables him to Identify and solve the psychological problems in a better way. Sufi is a social reformer who has reformer the humanity to achieve the love of God. He concentrates on self-purification and self-actualization. Sufi denies and degrades body or matter, removes the contradiction within his self and approaches the Nafs-e-Mutmainna which is the supreme level of his soul. And Sufi's relationship with his Mureeds or followers is also based on spiritual revival (Dzilo, 2015). So, his relationship with his followers is chiefly altruistic and sympathetic and is free of cost. In
addition this, the follower or patient actively participates in problem solving in contrast to the psychotherapy where the relationship between patient and psychology is purely professional. That is why, this professional relation is comparatively less helpful in psychological problem solving as compared to the Sufi techniques (Mitha, 2018). Therefore, we need to concentrate on these Sufi techniques so as to develop the branch of Sufi Psychology keeping in mind the cultural differences of our society from the Western society.

7. Conclusion

This study helps to conclude that Sufism has a great impact on the Pakistani society in the context of social, psychological, spiritual and political perspective. Developed theoretical model illustrated the multiple dimensions of each impact which shows Sufism is embedded in Muslim society with its positive role.

7.1. Limitation

- Future studies should interview the living Sufis to investigate their point of view regard.
- Another limitation of research is limited focus group, only one focus group is conducted and participants from only one university.

7.2. Implications

- This study would be very helpful for new branch of psychology, Sufi psychology
- This study would also provide insight in Pakistani practicing psychologist about indigenous way of catharsis and importance of local wisdom in Family therapy.
- This study will also be support the indigenous perspective of Psychology.

References


