

The Conceptual Foundation of Spiritual Well-Being: Psychology and Sufism

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ABSTRACT

Mental well-being is a topic that attracts attention from various disciplines, including psychology and Sufism. This research aims to explore the theoretical basis of mental well-being from the perspective of psychology and Sufism. This research is conducted in a descriptive qualitative manner using a literature approach. Data will be collected from various literature sources such as books, journal articles, and other academic works related to psychology and Sufism in the context of mental well-being. In the context of psychology, various theories such as selfdetermination theory, hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, and authentic happiness provide insight into the factors that contribute to individual mental well-being. On the other hand, Sufism, as a spiritual branch of Islam, offers a unique perspective on well-being through concepts such as zuhud (purification of the soul), ma'rifatullah (self-recognition of God), qalbun salim, patience and gratitude. Several studies have explored the relationship between psychology and spiritual and religious aspects. In general, it is found that individuals with higher levels of religiosity and spirituality tend to have better mental well-being. Psychology provides a scientific framework and practical techniques, while Sufism offers spiritual insights and a deep look into human nature and the purpose of life. By integrating the understanding of these two fields, it is hoped that good and reliable research results can be obtained.

Keywords: Mental well-being; Psychology; Spiritual; Sufism.

Submission	Review Process	Revised	Accepted	Published
20-062024	01-04-2024 s/d 23-08-2024	25-09-202	26-09-2024	06-12-2024

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INTRODUCTION

Happiness and peace are goals desired by every human being. The issue of happiness has been the main topic of discussion for writers, religious scholars, and philosophers for centuries. Aristotle (384 BC) stated that happiness is the ultimate goal of every human, although the activities leading to happiness are also a form of happiness (Kencana, 2022). According to Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, happiness refers to the term *sa'adah*, which is related to two dimensions of existence: the worldly and the hereafter. He believed that happiness is a state of a peaceful and serene soul, free from any deficiency. In Sufism, it is said that the pinnacle of happiness can be achieved when one attains *ma'rifat Allah* (knowledge of God). The happiness of ma'rifat Allah can be compared to the joy of the eyes when seeing something good, the ears when hearing beautiful things, and so forth (Arroisi, 2023). Syekh Muhammad Fathurahman M.Ag, the guide of the Idrisiyyah Tariqa, mentioned in his sermon that a happy person is someone who does not fear or worry about the future and does not grieve when calamity befalls them (https://tvri.go.id/live).

Happiness can be defined as the achievement of spiritual well-being in living life. Spiritual well-being is a fundamental aspect of human life that is often overlooked amidst the hustle and bustle of modern life. material and technological Although advancements have brought convenience in many ways, true happiness often slips out of human grasp (Seligman, 2010). This leads to anxiety and disappointment, as people become more focused on external matters and neglect the inner self. In the pursuit of balance and inner peace, two disciplines that can provide a strong theoretical foundation are psychology and Sufism. Spiritual well-being is regarded as something highly desirable, and one way to achieve a healthy soul is through positive self-adjustment and self-evaluation, which are closely related to how one thinks, plays roles, and acts (Choirudin, 2015).

Psychology, as the scientific study of the human mind and behavior, has rapidly advanced in recent decades. Various theories and approaches have been proposed to understand the dynamics of the human psyche, including factors that contribute to mental and emotional well-being. Approaches such as positive psychology (M. E. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), cognitivebehavioral therapy (Beck, 2011). and humanistic psychotherapy (Rogers, 1961)

have provided valuable insights into improving individual well-being. Psychology encompasses concepts of mental health, emotions, motivation, and individual and can be understood as perception, psychological well-being, reflecting a good mental state, free from various mental issues, and characterized by positive psychological functioning (Triana et al., 2021). On the other hand, Sufism, as the spiritual branch of Islam, offers profound insights into the purification of the soul and attaining closeness to God. Sufi teachings emphasize the importance of self-control, dhikr (remembrance of God), and inner purification as pathways to eternal happiness. Throughout history, prominent Sufi figures such as Imam Ghazali and Jalaluddin Rumi have provided inspiration and guidance on this spiritual journey, offering unique and profound perspectives on the nature of true happiness.

In a broader sense, Sufism is a normative framework for creating tranquility and peace. The anxieties that arise in a person's life can make Sufism a positive remedy. Sufism is a part of Islam that leads to a closer relationship with Allah SWT. Therefore, Sufism, in its essence, can be applied as a form of both physical and psychological healing (Kodariah, 2023). Both Sufism and psychology share a focus on the human soul, but there are differences. Psychology examines the state of the human soul from a scientific perspective, while Sufism views the soul through both outward (external) and inward (spiritual) lenses. It teaches that humans are not only physical beings but also spiritual beings with their origin in Allah SWT. By integrating insights from psychology and Sufism, this study aims explore a comprehensive theoretical to foundation in the pursuit of holistic spiritual well-being. Although these two disciplines come from different backgrounds, they share the same goal: to understand and improve the

quality of human life mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The similarities and differences in perspectives fuel this theoretical inquiry, aiming to identify the differences characteristics and between psychology and Sufism in the context of achieving spiritual well-being. It is hoped that this research can serve as a guide for methods that combine elements of Sufism and psychology to enhance spiritual well-being. By studying the key concepts of each field and identifying areas of convergence and synergy, this research has the potential to significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of human spiritual well-being.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing descriptive methods with a literature review from books, journals, articles, and other academic works related to psychology and Sufism in the context of spiritual well-being. In this study, the researcher does not require a physical location for the research but instead uses a critical examination of theories of spiritual well-being from the perspectives of psychology and Sufism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual Well-Being According to Psychology

Spiritual well-being, in the context of psychology, refers to a state in which an individual experiences emotional balance, life satisfaction, and the ability to develop optimally. It is not merely the absence of mental illness but rather a condition in which a person can lead a meaningful, productive, and happy life.

Spiritual well-being is not a static condition but a dynamic process that continually unfolds. Like a garden that always requires care, spiritual well-being also needs consistent attention and effort. However, with the right understanding and nurturing, this garden of spiritual well-being can flourish into a beautiful, peaceful place that benefits not only oneself but also those around. Here are some psychological theories related to spiritual well-being:

Subjective Well-Being Theory

Subjective well-being refers to an individual's positive evaluation of themselves regarding their life, characterized by a greater number of positive feelings than negative ones, as well as high life satisfaction in family, friendships, and school environments. Subjective well-being can be influenced by several factors, including internal factors (such as emotional intelligence, self-control, spirituality, optimism, and self-esteem) and external factors (such as social support, culture, and social relationships). In this study, early adolescents' subjective well-being is influenced by emotional intelligence (an internal factor) and social support (an external factor), which do not operate independently but rather interact, influence each other, and process together, ultimately leading to the achievement of high (positive) subjective well-being (Putri, 2016).

This theory was proposed by Ed Diener and refers to an individual's cognitive and affective evaluation of their life. It includes three main components: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Biswas-Diener et al., 2013). The level of subjective well-being of an individual can be determined through cognitive and affective evaluations of their life. Individuals with high subjective well-being are characterized by a higher frequency of positive experiences, such as high life satisfaction and dominant positive emotions, along with minimal experiences of negative emotions like sadness or anger. Conversely, individuals with low subjective well-being tend to experience dissatisfaction with life, experience little joy and affection, and are often overwhelmed by negative emotions such as anger or anxiety. A comprehensive assessment of the cognitive component in the form of life satisfaction and the affective component, which includes the balance between positive and negative affect, serves as the main indicators in measuring an individual's level of subjective well-being. Empirical findings indicate that high subjective well-being correlates with various positive aspects of life (Fadilah U, 2019).

Subjective well-being refers to the self-evaluation of happiness, joy, satisfaction, quality of life. Evaluations and and measurements are also conducted both overall and in detail. Events occurring at a specific time will impact an individual's level of assessment. Various aspects are utilized in evaluating the level of life well-being, including love, wisdom, happiness, and experiences that lead to a good life. Research has found that both positive and negative experiences will influence emotions and feelings during the assessment. The study found that well-being is not only related to income and possessions but also to factors related to health, activities, personality, emotions, mood, family, environment, and various other factors (Shamsinor & Azziz, 2021).

Eudaimonic Well-Beig Theory

The Eudaimonia Theory is an ethical and moral philosophy developed by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. This theory is based on the concept of eudaimonia from Aristotle, which refers to the achievement of one's potential to the fullest and the fulfillment of life's goals. One of its main models is the psychological well-being model by Carol Ryff (Ryff, 1989). Aristotle argued that humans have goals that need to be achieved through all their actions. Almost all activities state that goals are achieved for other purposes. For example, a father works

to earn money. Money exists to buy necessities. Needs are met so that tasks can be accomplished, and so on. In this context, Aristotle asks whether there is a highest, best, and final goal pursued for its own sake, rather than for anything else. If this is the case, then all the previously mentioned goals must be directed toward this final goal. Aristotle states that this final goal is eudaimonia, or happiness in the sense of well-being. Wellbeing means that all needs are met for the subject involved. The literal meaning of eudaimonia for the Greeks is perfection or more precisely, "having a good daimon." The daimon referred to here is the soul. A good or happy soul is the goal of every human being. No one would choose happiness for the sake of honor, power, or wealth. Thus, happiness is not a means but the ultimate goal of humanity (Nugroho, 2022).

Authentic Happiness Theory

The Authentic Happiness Theory was developed by Martin Seligman and emphasizes three main aspects: the pleasurable life, the meaningful life, and the engaged life (Seligman, 2002). In his book titled Authentic Happiness, Seligman presents a concept of happiness that encompasses both positive emotions and positive activities, divided into three temporal dimensions: the past, the future, and the present. Happiness regarding the past includes satisfaction, fulfillment, and peace. Two key concepts essential for achieving happiness from the past are gratitude and forgiveness. These concepts can transform one's perception and understanding of negative past experiences into a more positive outlook (M. E. P. Seligman, 2010).

Happiness is a positive emotion that arises from strengths and virtues. Positive feelings emerge by cultivating one's strengths and virtues rather than taking shortcuts to happiness, which is referred to as being authentic. Social support significantly correlates with happiness. On the other hand, there is also a relationship between social support and self-compassion. Selfcompassion is a concept that explains how individuals can endure, understand, and perceive difficult meanings as something positive (Sanjaya et al., 2023).

The concept of happiness is measured using two predictors: affection and life satisfaction. Affection refers to feelings related emotional experiences, to encompassing both pleasant feelings and enjoyable experiences. Meanwhile, life satisfaction is assessed by examining characteristics such as self-esteem and an optimistic attitude (Rusdiana, 2017). Selfesteem involves respecting and accepting oneself as is, acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses, and having confidence in one's abilities to achieve goals. It also includes taking responsibility for one's thoughts, feelings, and actions without blaming others. On the other hand, an optimistic attitude is characterized by a when positive outlook facing various situations and life conditions, tending to see the good side of every event and viewing failures as lessons and opportunities for improvement.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory was proposed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, emphasizing the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and social relatedness as predictors of well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-determination can be understood as the steadfastness to determine one's own fate, meaning it also involves not resigning to unfeasible conditions, being courageous in making decisions, and taking action to move forward. Deci and Ryan (2000) explain that self-determination is an individual's action

focused on choices made freely, without external influence or interference. A person chooses to behave in a way that reflects independence, and their behavior is not aimed at obtaining an external reward. When an individual lacks motivation and is unable to self-regulate, they tend to struggle in making meaningful life choices. The more an motivated internally individual is and possesses self-regulation, the greater the likelihood they will have self-determination. Furthermore. the one's selfgreater determination, the stronger the interest in intrinsic experiences, leading to greater enjoyment in life and a feeling of satisfaction. An individual also feels connected to the experiences they encounter and acts not based on rewards or praise from others. Deci and Ryan (in Compton 2005) outline that selfdetermination is characterized by three interconnected needs that lead to psychological growth as part of emotional needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Competence is described as an individual's need have to significant experiences that allow them to interact effectively with their environment, which determines how much students feel that their experiences enable them to relate effectively within their surroundings. Next, relatedness refers to the need for mutual support in interpersonal relationships. Lastly, autonomy the need for individuals to make is independent decisions about aspects of life that they deem important (Rozali, 2014).

Mental Well-being According to Sufism

Theory of Ma'rifah (Spiritual Knowledge)

The concept of ma'rifah in Sufism is closely related to mental well-being. Although the concept of ma'rifah in Sufism and mental well-being in modern psychology share many commonalities, they originate from different traditions and frameworks of thought. Ma'rifah is more focused on the relationship with the Divine, while mental well-being in psychology emphasizes individual psychological functions in the context of daily life. However, the integration of spiritual concepts like ma'rifah with modern psychological approaches can provide a more holistic understanding of human wellbeing, encompassing physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects.

According to Dr. Mustafa Zahri, ma'rifah is a firm conviction in believing in the existence of Allah, who embodies all perfection (A Mustafa, 2010). According to Imam Al-Ghazali, ma'rifah is knowledge that does not accept doubt regarding the essence and attributes of Allah. Ma'rifah of the essence of Allah is to know that Allah is the One, Singular, and the Most Majestic, selfsufficient, and incomparable to anything. Meanwhile, ma'rifah of the attributes involves truly knowing that Allah is the Ever-Living, the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful, the All-Hearing, and the All-Seeing, with all His perfect attributes. Thus, ma'rifah is the knowledge of the secrets of Allah and understanding the rules governing everything that exists. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali's opinion is clarified by another view stating that ma'rifah is to behold the face of Allah, meaning that a person, upon reaching a certain level, finds no space in their heart for anything other than their Lord (Kafrawi, 2020).

The signs of ma'rifah in a person include a heart that is alive with Allah SWT, where the desire to attain worldly knowledge has diminished. Such a person is like someone who has lost their appetite for fine foods, akin to someone who prefers to eat dirt rather than bread. All the cravings of this coarse body vanish upon death (when the soul departs from the body). However, the soul does not die and continues to carry knowledge of the Divine that resides within it. Remembrance (dzikir) of Allah SWT becomes a remedy, religious laws become the bridge, and all the attributes of reality become part of their character. They surrender and are content with Allah SWT's decrees, fully aware of their existence as a servant of Allah SWT, regularly worshiping Him not for anything in return but sincerely as a devoted servant to the attributes of Allah's perfection (Kafrawi, 2020).

Ma'rifah is the highest level in the application of Sufism that can be attained through mahabbah. Every human being can experience and feel mahabbah because, at its essence, mahabbah creates a sense of love for the Creator. Meanwhile, ma'rifah refers to the recognition or knowledge of God, enabling the heart to perceive God and feel close to Him. The relationship between the two can be expressed with the phrase, "love grows from knowledge and recognition of God." This phrase illustrates the correlation between mahabbah and ma'rifah. Ma'rifah can be attained when a person has traversed and experienced mahabbah. Mahabbah is the feeling of closeness to God through love (the spirit), whereas ma'rifah is a level of knowledge of God through the eye of the heart (al-Qalb) (Wati, 2020). Thus, a person who has experienced ma'rifah will feel true peace and well-being because they understand that true happiness can only be found with Allah SWT.

Theory of Qalb Salim (Sound Heart)

In the discourse regarding the condition of the human heart, Al-Ghazali mentioned that the heart possesses three states: the sound heart (qalbun salim), which is the heart that is safe and healthy. Such a heart, according to him, will be able to meet Allah SWT (Muhammad, n.d.). The second state is the dead heart (mayyit), which becomes hardened and stony, leading to the hardening of the heart itself. This condition arises from the numerous sins committed. The third state is the sick heart (maridh), which is characterized by a mix of faith, goodness, worship, and the sins it commits.

To avoid such detrimental effects on the human heart, it is advisable to undertake improvements of the heart, a process known as tajkiyah al-nafs. Tazkiyah al-Nafs is a method for nurturing the soul and educating moral character. Etymologically, it has two meanings: purification and healing. In terms of definition, it means the purification of the soul from all ailments by embodying the names and attributes of Allah as one's character (Takhalluq), ultimately leading to tazkiyah as tathahhur, tahaqquq, and takhalluq. According to Al-Ghazali, the concept of tazkiyah al-Nafs can serve as a model in Islamic psychotherapy and has a relationship close with mental health (Masyhuri, 2012). Tazkiyah al-Nafs is the initial step towards achieving a sound heart, free from various sins and transgressions.

Efforts that need to be made to possess a safe and sound heart, free from illness and death, require optimal heart education. One must be able to repent to Allah SWT. Repentance is an act of returning from wrong to right, and the attitude of repentance is something beloved by Allah SWT (Haromaini & Rachman, 2020). In Sufism, a sound heart (qalb salim) is regarded as the key to true happiness. A heart that is free from the diseases of the heart, such as envy, arrogance, greed, and others, will attain tranquility and eternal happiness. The meaning of qalbun salim is a heart that is pure and safe from polytheism. If I were to combine the meanings of qalbun salim according to various research findings, galbun salim is a heart that is pure and safe from corrupted beliefs, such as various forms of shirk. All of its acts of worship, intentions, affections,

trust, fears, hopes, and deeds are sincere for the sake of Allah SWT. It is a heart free from the diseases of disbelief and hypocrisy, devoid of resentment, hatred, and envy, and it is safe from inclinations toward worldly desires and all its pleasures. It is also a heart that does not dare to commit sins and disobedience to Allah SWT. always upholding His laws, loving the friends of Allah, and consistently fighting against the enemies of Allah (Fitri & Arifin, 2022). Thus, a sound heart will always bring tranquility and peace through closeness to Allah. The soul will find peace by believing that Allah is the owner of happiness, and the temporary nature of life will make one realize that good and evil are forms of tests that Allah provides.

Theory of Zuhud (Asceticism)

In Sufism, zuhud, or living simply and being unattached to worldly affairs, is regarded as a path to eternal happiness. By freeing oneself from worldly attachments, the soul will experience peace and joy. The concept of zuhud in Sufism, as taught and practiced by various Sufi figures, is rooted in Islamic teachings. The practice of a zuhud lifestyle, as one of the magomat (stations) in the system of Sufi teachings, is a legacy from the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. A person who seeks to attain a level of ma'rifah (knowledge of God) must prioritize the hereafter over worldly pleasures. A sign of someone with a zuhud attitude is treating the world as a means to attain the hereafter, rather than indulging in and loving it. The greater the capacity to relinquish ownership feelings of over worldly possessions, the higher one's rank in the sight of Allah. In today's materialistic life, the attitude of zuhud is essential, as it educates individuals not to excessively pursue worldly matters. An excessive attachment to worldly affairs can have dire consequences for one's

afterlife, which is the ultimate goal for every Muslim (Hafiun, 2017).

Modernization, with all its changes, brings both positive and negative impacts. One of the fundamental negative effects is the emergence of a hedonistic lifestyle. Such a way of life is certainly rejected by Islamic teachings, especially when viewed from the perspective of Sufism with its concept of zuhud. However, zuhud tends to be taken lightly by modern Muslims, as it is often understood as a complete rejection of worldly wealth. To navigate this glittering world, we need to train our hearts to adopt a zuhud attitude. Zuhud arises as pure moral awareness, which is then systematized by scholars and formulated into the fundamental concepts of Sufi tradition (Hasan, 2019).

Zuhud is not about completely abandoning the world; it does not mean focusing solely on worship while neglecting one's role in nurturing the earth. Instead, it involves using one's wealth as a bridge to attain the pleasure of Allah SWT, placing worldly matters in one's hands but not in one's heart. Zuhud does not imply that only those who wear tattered clothes and are lazy can embody it, as Islam does not teach such behavior. The benefits and importance of zuhud in modern life include marginalizing the love for worldly possessions and addressing the spiritual problems of modern society (Arrizgi, 2022). With the practice of zuhud, various issues will resolve themselves, as feelings of restlessness and disappointment stem from an attachment to the temporary nature of the world. A zuhud heart will diminish its love for the world, leading to a peaceful soul and an open heart in navigating life.

Theory of Patience and Gratitude (Divine Love)

Etymologically, patience comes from the Arabic word "sabara-yasbiru-sabrun," which means to endure. In terms of definition, patience refers to the ability to withstand all trials, not easily getting angry, despondent, or heartbroken. It can also be understood as maintaining calmness, whether in thoughts or feelings. According to the Sufi perspective, patience means enduring the commands of Allah SWT and avoiding all forms of His prohibitions, accepting all tests given by Allah SWT with patience and sincerity (Kurniawan et al., 2022). The term gratitude, according to al-Raghib al-Isfahani, implies "a mental image of blessings and manifesting them," as this term is believed to derive from "syakara," which means to reveal, making it the opposite of "kafara," meaning to conceal and implies forgetting or hiding blessings. The essence of gratitude is to "manifest blessings," while the essence of ingratitude is to hide them. Manifesting blessings means using them appropriately and according to the will of the giver, as well as verbally acknowledging the blessings and their giver (Sagir, 2014). Patience is one of the magamat (stations) in the science of Sufism. According to Ghazali in his book *Ihya Ulumuddin*, patience is the second magam after the magam of repentance. Magam refers to a person's standing before Allah SWT, indicating their position and responsibilities in daily life. Outside of Sufism, patience should also be present in every individual (Handayani, 2024).

Imam Al-Ghazali defines patience as a process of refraining from actions driven by carnal desires, arising from a particular state. According to him, patience is a rank among the ranks of religion and a degree among those who tread the path toward Allah, and it falls within the discussions of the science of Sufism. Patience is a trait unique to humans, whereas angels and animals do not possess this quality. Animals are the lowest beings compared to humans, and angels do not require patience because they do not have evil traits; moreover, angels are always busy and immersed in their love for Allah (Azzuhro, 2021).

Sabar dan syukur adalah senjata yang paling utama bagi orang-orang yang beriman, sabar ketika diberi cobaan dan syukur ketika diberi nikmat. Keduanya merupakan perpaduan yang teramat indah, bersyukur dan bersabarlah dengan sepenuh hati, dilafazkan secara lisan dengan ungkapan al-hamdulillah sebagai pernyataan syukur dan Inna Lillah wa inna ilaihi raji'un sebagai pernyataan bersabar. Apabila sabar dan syukur diimplementasikan dalam kehidupan maka tidak akan ada cemas, sedih atau pun menderita dalam menjalani kehidupan, kesejahteraan jiwa manusia akan terjamin dengan pengamalan dua indikator tersebut.

In Sufism, the well-being of the soul is inseparable from concepts such as *qolbun* salim (a healthy heart), zuhud (asceticism), sabar (patience), and syukur (gratitude). In this context, soul well-being encompasses the balance and health of the soul, heart, and spirit. Generally, individuals with higher levels of religiosity and spirituality tend to have better subjective well-being. The closer someone is to Allah, the more likely they are to achieve high soul well-being due to inner peace, a sense of purpose, and clear goals. In Sufism, soul well-being is a holistic condition involving the harmony of the soul, heart, and spirit, achieved through spiritual practices such as the development of golbun salim, zuhud, sabar, and syukur.

The theories presented above can be compared: theories in the realm of psychology focus on mental well-being or the psychological condition of individuals influenced by physical factors, health status, and material and social support. In contrast, in Sufi or Islamic spirituality theories, achieving inner peace or the heart is attained through a close and connected relationship with God. Thus, there is a fundamental difference in the influencing factors, where in Sufism the main

subject is the heart or human soul, whereas in psychology, the main subject is the physical and material condition of humans. Furthermore, there is another difference concerning permanence, where Sufism offers the attainment of eternal and everlasting soul well-being, while in psychology, mental wellbeing is temporary and dependent on the fluctuating physical and material conditions of humans.

CONCLUSION

Psychology provides a scientific framework and practical techniques, offering concepts of well-being and happiness from various perspectives, including cognitive, affective, self-actualization, meaning in life, and basic psychological needs. In contrast, Sufism offers spiritual insights and a profound understanding of the concepts of well-being and the happiness of the soul from a spiritual and Sufi viewpoint. It emphasizes aspects such as knowledge of God, the purity of the heart, simplicity in life, and love for God as keys to achieving true happiness and soul well-being. The integration of psychology and Sufism can be highly effective and beneficial in attaining human soul well-being, as it combines practical techniques with deep spiritual insights, fostering a holistic approach to mental and spiritual health.

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