

## Teachers' Perceptions on Sufi Practices-A Study of the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences Bhitshah, Sindh, Pakistan

Arshad Saleem, Muhammad Munir Kayani

Post Doctoral Research Fellow (Education), Department of Educational Leadership & Management, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan & Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Sufism and Modern Sciences Bhitshah, Sindh, Pakistan.

Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Education, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

**Corresponding author:** [arshadsaleem1968@gmail.com](mailto:arshadsaleem1968@gmail.com)

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*In this study, the views of the teaching faculty at the University of Sufism & Modern Sciences, Bhitshah, about the practices of Sufism have been investigated thoroughly. This study aims to unravel the pedagogical, philosophical, and spiritual paradigms of Sufi practices for developing a friendly, competitive, and progressive learning environment. It was a quantitative study. Thirty-three faculty members selected through the purposive sampling technique participated in the study. These were involved in lengthy, validated questions to provide insight into Sufi practices and their incorporation into teaching. Selection was based on age, experience, gender, and designation. There were four key variables: Sufi Practices (SP), Teaching Perception (TP), Integration (IN), and Social Impact (SI). Data was analyzed through SPSS 22 with descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed a positive, strong correlation among SP, TP, and IN, describing those Sufi practices engagement significantly enhanced teaching satisfaction with a sense of academic integration. On the other hand, the social impact had a moderate correlation with other variables. A remedy is suggested towards introducing these practices as part of the academic learning framework. The study reveals that the teachers widely comprehend Sufi philosophy and keep it in mind for spiritual development, emotional intelligence, and an open learning environment. However, most of the faculty members struggle to put these practices into daily teaching due to a lack of adequate training, facilities, and institutional backing for curriculum incorporation. The implications of this study are vast and have possibilities for broad utilization in teacher preparation, policy formation, and curriculum construction. Since the pre-primary level, the integration of Sufi values in education might empower the establishment of a more ethical, spiritually balanced, and morally balanced learning community.*

## 1. Introduction, Background and Context

In an age where education systems place greater emphasis on overall development, the incorporation of spiritual and ethical values into academic systems has become a focal point. Sufism, with its deep history of self-reflection, tolerance, and service to mankind, provides a distinctive paradigm for developing emotional, intellectual, and moral development among students (Karimullah, 2023). The University of Sufism & Modern Sciences (USMS) in Bhitshah, Sindh, Pakistan, is a pioneering university that is committed to bridging the ageless wisdom of Sufi practices with modern pedagogical methods. Nevertheless, the degree to which these practices are known, appreciated, and applied by the faculty members is yet to be explored.

This research explores teachers' attitudes toward Sufi practices at USMS, seeking to determine their potential as agents of a transformative learning environment. Sufi practices like *samaa* (spiritual music), meditation, and communal service are not ritualistic exercises but pedagogical instruments (Manzoor & Shah, 2018) that can foster empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility among students as different life skills have been focused in the national and international literature (DeJaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022; Feraco et al., 2023; Jamil et al., 2024; Jamil et al., 2024; Naseer et al., 2022). However, their incorporation into contemporary curricula is hindered by insufficient training, institutional limitations, and differing faculty attitudes.

Around the world, the quest for knowledge and its application is usually interlinked with emotional, spiritual, and intellectual development (Leon & Romanelli, 2020). Yet, this important element is a missing link in the overall puzzle required for global citizens to embrace, tolerate, and live in harmony and peace. This research informs larger conversations around spiritually informed education and offers practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and institutions that want to integrate traditional wisdom with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning needs. The findings reveal that USMS's mission is to serve as a model for integrating Sufi values into academia, ultimately fostering a generation of ethically conscious and socially engaged graduates.

The University of Sufism & Modern Sciences, Bhitshah, Sindh, Pakistan, is a beacon for this education paradigm, bridging and reinvigorating the Islamic ideology of Sufism and adapting it to the contemporary system of education. Being a trendsetter, it shoulders the onus of merging Sufi philosophy with the changing needs of the contemporary educational system to foster and sustain genuine human experiences. The University of Sufism & Modern Sciences, Bhitshah, was specially founded to work on Sufism, Sufi philosophy, Sufi practices, and the contribution of Sufis towards enhancing education in the subcontinent. This university is the sole academic institution in Pakistan working in this field. As the contribution and influence of Sufi practices have not been studied yet, this research is important in identifying and suggesting methods to incorporate Sufi practices into teaching in the classroom at the university. This research examines the Sufi practices of Sindh's saints, specifically the practices of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, as witnessed at the University of Sufism & Modern Sciences, Bhitshah.

The research is intended to further the understanding of Sufi practices, their meaning, and their potential integration with contemporary education. Through university faculty

perceptions, the research will shed light on how the practices can be implemented effectively in teaching and curriculum planning for students' overall development. The intention is to meet the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social requirements of a well-rounded graduate. The results of this research will also be useful for national and provincial policymakers in examining the existing curriculum considering Sufi practices and their value when incorporated into teaching, learning, assessment, and comprehensive student evaluation. The research will also examine the applicability of a Sufi-based model of education in today's digital age, focusing on 21st-century skills and the use of technology in the teaching-learning process. This is going to help shape a more responsible and well-rounded academic society that is better equipped to respond to ever-evolving global challenges.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between Sufi practices, teaching perceptions, integration, and social impact among faculty at the University of Sufism & Modern Sciences, Bhitshah, Sindh, Pakistan.
2. To investigate how engagement with Sufi practices influences teaching satisfaction and academic integration among faculty members.

## 2. Literature Review

Sufism has also been traditionally considered the religious essence of Islam and has acted as a motivational force for cultural, social, and educational models (Habib & Ullah, 2025). The case of the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences (USMS) at Bhitshah, Sindh, Pakistan, is particularly appropriate to reflect teachers' opinions regarding Sufi practices and their relevance in the contemporary era. This research investigates Sufi values' contribution to education, including the inclusion of Sufi values, their effects on society, and the ability to reinforce teaching practice's spiritual and moral dimensions. This literature presents a clear picture of the contribution of Sufi practices to learning, including that from the teacher's perspective. From curriculum integration to sociological impact and relationships between genders, Sufi practices offer a rich and empowering framework for constructing morally sound, inclusive, and spiritually grounded education (Karimullah, 2023). The unique context of USMS in Bhitshah offers an argument for exploring these dynamics in detail, contributing valuable insights to the broader argument surrounding spiritual education.

### 2.1. Integration of Sufi Practices in Education

Sufi practices contribute to character development, tolerance, and moral conduct in education. Sufi principles are now a mandatory curriculum element of junior high Islamic education (Abitolkha & Mas' ud, 2021). This addition facilitates moral growth and spiritual sensitivity in young learners. These results support Fitriyah et al. (2022), who write on environmental education with a Sufi approach, emphasizing human-nature harmony. Their reaction resonates with the holistic person approach that defines Sufism as a spirit in alignment with the recommendations for sustainable education. O'Dell (2011) explores the ways that Sufi beliefs influence teaching in Dushanbe to increase cultural identity and religious profundity in schools. Ramadhan and Qamariah (2024) also ponder the role that Sufi values play in fostering tolerance

in future teachers. Their findings show how the implementation of Sufi principles into curricula encourages moderation and tolerance among students.

## **2.2. Teachers' Perspectives on Sufism in the Curriculum**

Teachers play a crucial role in guaranteeing the success of incorporating Sufi practices into school curricula. Salleh et al. (2011) examined teachers' perception and acceptance of Tauhidic science education, which integrates scientific and spiritual paradigms. The study listed challenges such as limited resources and training but also offered chances for increased spiritual engagement in teaching.

Niyozov and Pluim (2009) emphasize the need for teachers to be involved in curriculum development, particularly when teaching Muslim students. Their research discovers that there is little literature regarding spirituality and education and calls for more inclusive teacher involvement in the designing of educationally appropriate curricula. Bekkaoui et al. (2011) also examine Moroccan teachers' perception of Sufi orders and how they affect the spiritual and social development of students.

Mustofa and Hakim (2024) focus their attention on Muslim youth in urban areas, describing how Sufi education promotes moderate Islamic inclinations. Their work is pivotal to the comprehension of the transformative potential of Sufi practices in addressing modern societal challenges. These works highlight the importance of teacher training and assistance to effectively integrate Sufi values into educational systems.

## **2.3. Social Impacts of Sufi Practices**

Sufi practices are immensely socially and culturally significant, affecting attitudes and perceptions within different societies. Abbas et al. (2013) studied public attitudes towards shrine visits in Pakistan, reporting their long-standing cultural identity and spirituality associations. Saeed and Batool (2021) discuss how present-day social developments impact Sufism. Budhwani and McLean (2019) examine the lens of human resource development with reference to Sufi teachings in social movements. They emphasize the virtue of humility, service, and ethical leadership as the promoters of social cohesion and practice of change leadership. AchmadKurniady and Rosalin (2021) also study how Sufi values augment ethical leadership, character building, and harmony in organizations.

## **2.4. Gender Perspectives in Sufi Practices**

Over the past few decades, gender has been given special attention to Sufi practices. Baried et al. (2022) and Burak-Adli et al. (2024) focus on the role of Sufi women, highlighting their contribution to spiritual and sociopolitical environments. They question conventional gender roles and highlight the transformative and inclusive nature of Sufi practices in bringing about gender equality. Sündal (2012) offers a qualitative overview of Sufi spirituality and its utilization in daily life, highlighting the interaction between religious practice and its role within society. These findings are vital for teachers attempting to intervene in gender relations in Sufi education.

## **2.5. Practical Challenges and Opportunities**

It is difficult to integrate Sufi practices into educational institutions in some ways. Arshaad et al. (2023) discuss the curative nature of Sufi practices in a Faisalabad shrine, demonstrating their capability to augment mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. However, their research invokes the need for institutional support and policy climates to facilitate this integration. Wajdi and Prayudianti (2025) describe about Sufi student movements and how they helped disseminate moderate ideologies. Their work identifies the ability of spiritual education to help fight extremism and ensure inclusivity. Teachers, as the primary stakeholders, must be equipped with the necessary tools and resources in order to be capable of taking advantage of these opportunities.

## 2.6. Teachers' Role in Sustaining Sufi Practices

Teachers' perception of Sufi practices significantly affects their instruction and learners' learning experiences. Moshtahari (2019) illustrates how teachers implement Sufi-informed practices, such as music and storytelling, to foster student participation and achievement. This is supported by Bilqies (2014), who stresses that Islamic Sufism encourages values of ethics and spirituality. Kurniady and Rosalin (2021) highlight the importance of ethical teaching leadership in explicating how the principles of Sufism incite teachers towards becoming moral exemplars to the students. Kurniady and Rosalin (2021)'s work highlights the double professionalism of teaching in terms of education and religion and demands staff development programs encompassing Sufi values.

## 3. Research Methodology

This research takes a quantitative approach because of the nature of the topic. Sufism, Sufi practices, and attitudes are central components of this research, which are more understandable using these approaches. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated for credibility and reliability prior to piloting. The pilot study results were assessed, and revisions were adopted by the recommendation of the experts prior to full-scale implementation. This integration aims to promote the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth of students, ultimately fostering responsible individuals within society. The framework consists of the following components:

- 1. Sufi Practices:** This component covers core Sufi traditions, rituals, and practices such as meditation, *samaa* (spiritual music), reflection, deep observation, critical thinking, and service to humanity. These practices align with essential 21st-century skills that every university student should acquire for holistic development.
- 2. Teachers' Perceptions:** This component examines teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward Sufi practices and their connection to teaching. Their perceptions will be influenced by factors such as past experiences, qualifications, cultural backgrounds, and exposure to professional training.
- 3. Integration:** This component refers to the formal academic programs and courses offered at USMS. These curricula are designed to promote students' emotional, social, and intellectual development, which can be further enhanced by incorporating Sufi practices.

**4. Social Impact:** Sufi practices are of great social and cultural importance, influencing perceptions and attitudes in various societies

This quantitative study was set to collect primary data from university teachers, including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants from full-time, contractual, male, or female. Data was analyzed through SPSS 22 with descriptive and inferential statistics.

### 3.1 Population and Sample

The study population comprised all university teachers, regardless of gender, employment status (regular, contractual, or visiting), or academic rank. Data was classified based on rank, gender, experience, subject, department, and age. The samples of the study were 33 faculty members from a particular university (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

### 3.2 Instrument

A formal questionnaire was designed with established reliability and credibility. It was piloted, and based on feedback, necessary revisions were made before administration. Responses were recorded along with observational data. Two scholars reviewed the instrument to assess its reliability and credibility. It was then piloted on a segment of the population. After reviewing the pilot study results, necessary revisions were made before administering.

## 4. Findings and Results

This section presents descriptive statistics and visual representations of the collected data, focusing on respondent demographics and key variables, as shown in Table 1.

**Table No 1: Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Demographics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age of Respondent	33	1.00	4.00	2.1765	.71650
Education of Respondent	33	1.00	3.00	2.4545	.56408
Gender of Respondent	33	1.00	2.00	1.3636	.48850
Teaching Experience of Respondent	33	1.00	4.00	1.9394	.93339
Designation of Respondent	33	1.00	4.00	2.3636	.78335
Department of Respondent	33	1.00	5.00	3.1818	1.35680

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of four variables. Each variable is analyzed using standard descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency, dispersion, and distribution. Most of the respondents were male (63.6%, n=21), while females accounted for 36.4% (n=12). One response was missing (2.9% of the total sample, N=33). The pie chart visually reinforces this distribution, highlighting the predominance of male participants. Most respondents held an MS/M. Phil or PhD degree (48.5% each, n=16), with only one respondent





reporting a Bachelor's degree (3.0%). The data indicates a highly educated sample with no missing values for valid responses (N=33). Lecturers constituted the largest group (54.5%, n=18), followed by Assistant Professors (27.3%, n=9). Teaching Assistants and Associate Professors were equally represented (9.1% each, n=3). The distribution reflects a diverse academic hierarchy among respondents. Respondents were predominantly experienced, with 41.2% (n=14) having 6–10 years of experience and 35.3% (n=12) reporting 1–5 years. A smaller proportion had 11–15 years (12.1%, n=4) or above 15 years (9.1%, n=3). The Education department had the highest representation (30.3%, n=10), followed by Information Technology, Business Administration, and English (18.2% each, n=6). Computer Science accounted for 15.2% (n=5). The largest age group was 31–40 years (55.9%, n=19), followed by 31–50 years (26.5%, n=9). Younger (21–30 years) and older (51+) respondents were fewer (14.7% and 2.9%, respectively).

**Table No 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables**

		SP (Sufi Practices)	TP (Teaching Perception)	IN (Integration)	SI (Social Impact)
N	Valid	33	33	33	33
Mean		25.8485	23.8788	24.1818	20.1818
Median		26.0000	24.0000	24.0000	21.0000
Mode		25.00a	27.00	22.00a	18.00a
Std. Deviation		3.22220	3.86295	3.57469	5.04018
Variance		10.383	14.922	12.778	25.403
Minimum		18.00	17.00	17.00	6.00
Maximum		30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00
Sum		853.00	788.00	798.00	666.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Table 2 provides critical insights into how respondents perceived the four key variables. The mean of Sufi Practices (SP): 25.85 is the highest mean among all variables, indicating that respondents generally reported strong engagement with Sufi practices. Teaching Perception (TP): 23.88 is slightly lower than SP but still relatively high, suggesting positive perceptions of teaching. The mean of Integration (IN): 24.18 is close to TP, implying that respondents felt a moderate-to-high level of integration. Lastly, the mean of the Social Impact (SI): 20.18 is the lowest mean, indicating that respondents perceived social impact as less pronounced compared to other factors. The medians for all variables (SP=26, TP=24, IN=24, SI=21) align closely with their means, suggesting a symmetrical distribution without strong skewness. The Mode of all the variables (TP: 27.00, SP: 25.00, IN: 22.00, SI: 18.00) starts from the highest towards the lowest. The presence of multiple modes for SP, IN, and SI suggests subgroups within the data with differing response patterns. The Standard Deviation (SD) of all the variables (SP=3.22,

TP=3.86, IN=3.57, SI=25.40) show that SP achieves low variability, meaning responses were clustered near the mean. At the same time, TP is slightly higher variability than SP. SI indicated greater diversity in responses (some respondents perceived high social impact, while others reported low impact). Sufi Practices (SP) and Teaching Perception (TP) were rated most favourably, with low variability, suggesting consensus among respondents. (IN) scores were like TP, indicating that respondents felt moderately integrated. Social Impact (SI) had the lowest mean, highest variability, and widest range, implying mixed perceptions—some respondents saw strong social impact, while others saw minimal effects. Sufi Practices and Teaching Perceptions were consistently rated high, and Social Impact was more divisive, with significant disagreement among participants. These findings set the stage for further inferential analysis (e.g., correlation or regression) to explore relationships between these variables and demographic factors. Below is a detailed breakdown of the findings:

**Table No 3: Correlations among four variables**

	Correlations			
	SP	TP	IN	SI
SP	-			
TP	.877**			
IN	.816**	.886**		
SI	.385*	.447**	.418*	
	.027	.009	.016	
	33	33	33	33

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**\***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the Correlation that describes the relationship among the four variables (SP, TP, IN, SI). Respondents who engaged more in Sufi practices (SP) tended to have significantly more positive teaching perceptions (TP). Higher Sufi practice engagement was strongly associated with greater feelings of integration (IN). Positive teaching perceptions (TP) were closely linked to higher integration (IN). Sufi practices had a weaker but still significant relationship with perceived social impact (SI). Teaching perceptions were moderately correlated with social impact. Integration levels were somewhat tied to social impact perceptions. All correlations marked with ( $p < 0.01$ ) or ( $p < 0.05$ ) are statistically significant, meaning these relationships are unlikely due to random chance. The strongest relationships (SP-TP, SP-IN, TP-IN) are highly significant ( $p = 0.000$ ), reinforcing their robustness.



Table No 4: Summary of Relationships

Variable Pair	Correlation (r)	Strength	Significance (p)	Summary
SP ↔ TP	0.877	Very strong	$p < 0.01$	Deep linkage between Sufi practices and teaching satisfaction.
SP ↔ IN	0.816	Strong	$p < 0.01$	Sufi practices strongly relate to feelings of integration.
TP ↔ IN	0.886	Very strong	$p < 0.01$	Teaching satisfaction and integration are nearly inseparable.
SP ↔ SI	0.385	Moderate	$p < 0.05$	Sufi practices modestly predict social impact.
TP ↔ SI	0.447	Moderate	$p < 0.01$	Teaching perceptions have a clearer (but still modest) tie to social impact.
IN ↔ SI	0.418	Moderate	$p < 0.05$	Integration partially aligns with social impact perceptions.

Table 4 describes the correlational analysis among four variables of the study. As per the above table, Sufi practices (SP) have a very strong correlation with teaching satisfaction (TP) ( $r = 0.877$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). There is a strong relationship with integration (IN) ( $r = 0.816$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) that shows engagement in Sufi practices significantly increases both professional performance and a sense of belonging. There is a close link between teaching satisfaction and integration ( $r = 0.886$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which suggests the inseparability of these. However, there is a moderate correlation of social impact with Sufi practices ( $r = 0.385$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), teaching satisfaction ( $r = 0.447$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and integration ( $r = 0.418$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating the social impact of these factors, as the impact is comparatively weaker. Overall, the findings highlight the strong correlation of Sufi practices, teaching satisfaction, and integration, with social impact playing a more moderate role.

Figure No 1: Interconnected network (left side) and Correlation heatmap (right side)

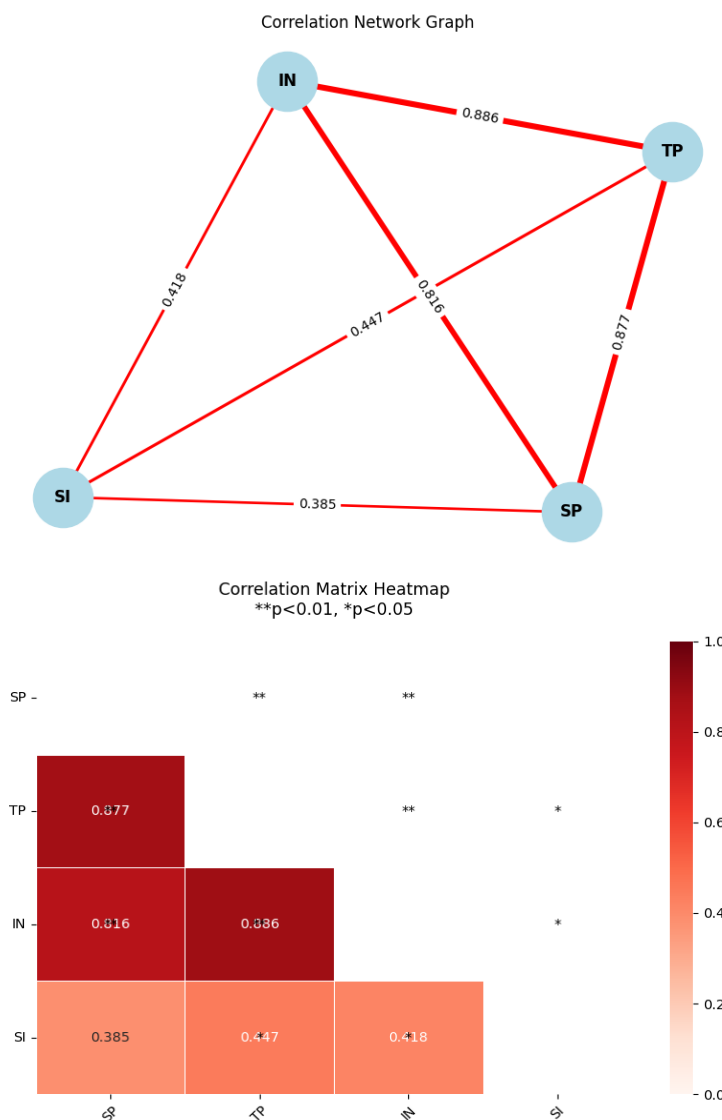


Figure 1 shows the correlation heatmap (right side) and the Interconnected network (left side), indicating the patterns and implications of Interconnected Core Variables (SP, TP, IN, SI). Further, it shows a very strong correlation ( $r > 0.8$ ) between SP, TP, and IN, suggesting these variables share underlying dimensions (e.g., spiritual engagement and professional fulfilment). Sufi practices (SP) may enhance teaching perceptions (TP) by fostering mindfulness or resilience. Positive teaching experiences (TP) could promote a sense of integration (IN) in academic settings. SI had weaker correlations ( $r \approx 0.4$ ) with SP, TP, and IN, implying it is less directly tied to the other variables. This suggests social impact may be influenced by external factors (e.g., institutional policies, community engagement) beyond individual practices or perceptions. Table 4 shows the summary of the Relationship among each variable pair, along with correlation and statistical significance.

#### 4.1 Discussion

According to the findings of the study, there is a significant correlation between Sufi practices, teaching perceptions, and academic integration among faculty members. There are positive correlations between Sufi practices and teaching perceptions and between Sufi

practices and integration that suggest that engaging faculty deeply with Sufi traditions experience improved teaching satisfaction and academic belonging. These results are like Karimullah's (2023) regarding how Sufi perspectives enhance character education and professional satisfaction among educators. There is a close relationship between teaching satisfaction and integration that indicates these constructs may share primary dimensions associated with professional fulfilment, supported by AchmadKurniady and Rosalin's (2021) research. On the other hand, the moderate correlations of social impact with other variables indicate that wider social outcomes function slightly independently from individual spiritual and teaching practices, contrasting the findings of Budhwani and McLean (2019). The difference in the influence of the institutional policies and community engagement frameworks is a conclusion reinforced by Niyozov and Pluim's (2009) work about the involvement of teachers in curriculum development. The consistency in responses about Sufi practices compared to the greater variability in social impact perceptions further demonstrates this distinction, suggesting their translation into wider social impact requires additional institutional and structural support mechanisms, as highlighted by Salleh et al. (2011) in their study of challenges implementing spiritually informed educational approaches.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendation

The strong SP-TP-IN nexus supports a holistic model where spiritual, professional, and communal factors are intertwined. SI operates more independently, warranting separate exploration (e.g., qualitative studies to identify non-personal influences). Institutions could enhance teacher well-being (TP) and integration (IN) by promoting Sufi or mindfulness practices (SP). To improve social impact (SI), strategies beyond individual practices (e.g., community partnerships) may be needed. This study underscores the interconnectedness of spiritual, professional, and social dimensions in academic settings while highlighting areas for targeted intervention.

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