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**Healing the Soul, Connecting the Social: Spirit-Based Practices in Modern Religious Life**

**Anila Hassan**

Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology, International Islamic University,  
Islamabad, Pakistan

[anilahassan2890@gmail.com](mailto:anilahassan2890@gmail.com)

**Dr. Saira Batool**

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, International Islamic University,  
Islamabad, Pakistan

[saira.batool@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:saira.batool@iiu.edu.pk)

**Abstract**

*This study explores the goals and methods of healing practices and therapeutic encounters guided by a Sufi Saint and their influence on visitors at Dua House. The research includes perspectives from both the spiritual guide and the seekers, offering a broader view. While previous studies have focused on medical and psychological aspects, this study emphasizes the social and spiritual factors affecting healing experiences. Using constructivist grounded theory, 13 semi-structured interviews were purposively sampled and analyzed. The analysis generated categories offering theoretical insights into the healing process. Results indicate that the pursuit of spiritual healing can stem from both challenging life circumstances and an innate desire for a divine connection. Spiritual practices aim to purify the human soul. Through continuous remembrance of Allah, the aura of spiritual places and the teachings of Sufi Saints are believed to have a profound transformative effect. These practices promote moral correction, strengthen faith, and foster social inclusion, as well as psychological and physical well-being. The study emphasizes the importance of a spiritual guide and proposes key criteria for identifying an authentic Sufi Saint. Overall, the findings demonstrate the positive impact of spiritual healing on individuals and highlight its broader sociological significance, offering new insights into the sociology of religion.*

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Healing, Divine Intervention, Sufi Saint, Therapeutic Encounters, Sociology of Religion, Grounded Theory.*

**Introduction**

Over the centuries, people have visited shrines or sought out living saints, seeking physical, mental, and spiritual healing through divine intervention (Arshad, Mushtaq, Khan, & Sarwar, 2023; Charan et al., 2023). Spirituality, as Harris et al. defined, “a search for the sacred (e.g., manifestation of the divine) involving a relationship with an ultimate concern that is somehow meaningful,” whereas “Religiousness, a ritual, institutional, or codified spirituality which is culturally sanctioned” (as cited in Pyne et al., p. 448, 2023). The Cambridge Dictionary (2025)

defines spiritual healing as “the activity of making a person healthy without using medicine or other physical methods, sometimes as a part of religious ceremony”. Studies consistently proposed that integrating spiritual care, such as compassion, meditation, mindfulness, and prayer, into the scientific healthcare system can improve the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of patients with chronic illness and depression. However, a gap remains in fully incorporating such practices into the healthcare system (Mendenhall et al., 2021; Gulbahar Eren et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2024; Harris, 2024; Levin, 2024; Julakarn et al., 2025).

Research on integrating spiritual healing into healthcare inspired me to explore a healing-based institute. While extensive work exists on Shrine-based and other healing practices, the original spiritual masters are often long deceased, with descendants or appointed successors continuing their work. This study is distinct in examining practices from the participants and the Sufi Saint of Dua House.

Syed Sarfraz A. Shah, the founder of Dua House (Spiritual Healing Centre), was born in 1944 in Jalandhar and raised in a religious environment that nurtured his spiritual curiosity. Inspired by Hazrat Ali (R.A.) and later by prominent Sufi Saints, he pursued intense spiritual training under Syed Yaqoob Ali Shah (R.A.), who named him his sole caliph and bearer of the seal of sainthood from the Chishtiya, Sabriya, and Warsia lineages. Over time, he received a second caliphate from the Junaidiya lineage through Hazrat Ali Hujwari Data Ganj Bakhsh (R.A.) and a third from the Qadriya lineage through Hazrat Miyan Meer (R.A.), solidifying his spiritual authority. After his mentor’s passing in 1986, he dedicated his ancestral home in Lahore as Dua House, a humble place for spiritual gatherings, supplications, lectures, and healing practices rooted in Islamic teachings. Known for his humility, logical discourse, and non-political stance, many regard him as a Mujadid (rejuvenator) of this era. Sarfraz A. Shah has authored nine books on spirituality and ethics. His disciples also maintain a dedicated website (<https://kahayfaqeer.org/>) that shares his teachings and provides access to his work. Over time, Dua House expanded to include branches in Islamabad, Faisalabad, and London; however, the Lahore branch has remained the most active and was selected for this research to gain an understanding of its healing practices. Countless people have benefited from this spiritual center, forming the basis of this research to explore healing experiences guided by a spiritual mentor and their societal implications.

### **Research Question**

- I. What changes are experienced by the people after visiting Dua House?
- II. How do these spiritual practices contribute to the healing of individuals with various social issues?
- III. To examine the perspective of the Sufi Saint on spirituality and healing

### **Review of Literature**

Research on spiritual healing has been steadily increasing. Upon reviewing literature from 2000 onward, I observed a significant increase in studies following the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in repetitive findings. I therefore focused on the latest research, including a few earlier works that addressed aspects overlooked in recent studies. I also reduced emphasis on older studies when their findings overlapped with current ones, aiming to offer a clear perspective for analyzing my research area.

Sociologists, despite differing in perspectives, agree that religion plays a central role in society. Durkheim emphasized that religion is a social institution that unites people through sacred beliefs and rituals, reinforcing social cohesion and collective identity, while also stressing the need to balance science and religion (as cited in Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018, p. 151; as cited in Dillon, 2014, p. 111). Marx described religion as reflecting human suffering yet offering comfort and an escape, famously calling it the “opium to people” (as cited in Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018, p. 112). However, Weber emphasized the influence of religion on economic behavior, social change, and cultural values (as cited in Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018, p. 200). His theory of charisma and its routinization underpins this study’s focus on the Sufi Saint as a charismatic personality and Dua House as a charismatic community. The study explores how Weber’s temporality of charisma is perceived within a spiritual context (Dillon, 2014, pp. 142-143).

From a psychological perspective, Pargament (1997) highlighted that religion influences all aspects of life, particularly in times of crisis, either as a primary source of healing or as a part of routine practice (p. 142). His Brief RCOPE remains widely applied, with findings indicating that positive coping supports interventions, while negative coping signals the need for assistance (Saunders & Stephenson, 2024). Religion thus functions as a source of strength and an adaptive strategy, helping to alleviate mental health issues and caregiving stress (Domaradzki & Walkowiak, 2024). At the same time, religious strain can be harmful, highlighting meaning-making as a critical link between detrimental effects and underscoring the importance of meaning-making as a crucial link between religion and well-being (Krok et al., 2024).

From an Islamic perspective, Subandi et al. (2023) proposed integrating Al-Ghazali’s framework, DOTSH (disease of the spiritual heart), into psychiatric models, viewing spiritual disharmony as a precondition for mental illness. Islamic teachings, on the other hand, promote resilience and holistic well-being (Bukhari, 2025; Qureshi et al., 2025). Building on this view, Rahman (2014) explained that Sufi spiritual healing not only alleviates human suffering but also awakens God-gifted, hidden qualities (p. 2). Arifka (2025) described Sufism as a form of mysticism rooted in the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Milani (2024) similarly argued that Sufism is the expression of mysticism within Islam, offering peace and tolerance as a means to address modern conflicts (Manzoor et al., 2019). More broadly, people across cultures turn to religious, cultural, and traditional practices for healing,

highlighting the universal role of these practices in health (Mächt, 2021; Asadzandi et al., 2021; Ibrahim, 2024).

Sufi saints promote emotional and mental well-being through the purification of the soul with “*Zikr*” practices, with studies suggesting that their integration into healthcare could enhance healing in spiritually oriented communities (Cetinkaya & Billings, 2024; Kilicheva & Kilicheva, 2020). Broader research highlights the value of combining medical, spiritual, and traditional literacies to address distress across cultures (Raghavan et al., 2022) and emphasizes the need to train healthcare providers in spiritually sensitive care (Moschella, 2023; Daniel & Harris, 2024; Vaziri et al., 2025; Cheng et al., 2025; Meeprasertsagool et al., 2025). Evidence from South Asia indicates that patients frequently seek spiritual or folk healers due to trust, cultural tradition, or limited access to medical facilities (Anwar et al., 2025, p. 7; Sharma et al., 2020; Priya & Kukreja, 2024). Similarly, Studies in Turkey have found that a strong religious or spiritual orientation reduces anxiety among patients and caregivers, supporting the integration of religious coping strategies in clinical contexts, such as Oncology (Koç et al., 2023; Aslan et al., 2023; Çakmak et al., 2024; Semerci et al., 2024). Future research should further test Quranic approaches and Islamic psychotherapies to strengthen the role of spirituality in mental health care (Rofiqoh et al., 2025).

Datu and Fincham (2024) validated the “divine connectedness scale,” which links a sense of being guided, supported, and collaborating with God to religiosity, greater well-being, and meaning. Novak and Mattes (2025) showed that digital culture has reshaped religious identity and engagement by blending online and offline practices. Digital spaces expand participation and empower marginalized voices, but they also fragment religious authority and authenticity, promoting individualized forms of belief (pp. 186–190).

Alongside authentic accounts of healing, some institutions engage in pseudo-spirituality and mislead individuals. In rare cases like Ghana, inappropriate healing practices and medication side effects hindered psychiatric treatment. The study underscored the importance of safeguarding rights and integrating safe faith-based practices into mental health care (Gyimah et al., 2022). In another instance, Hong Kong Christian women survivors of sexual violence reported spiritual harm from the church yet maintained faith, underscoring the importance of trauma-informed pastoral care (Yih, 2024). Conversely, Gracia (2024) found empowerment, resilience, and supportive networking in women involved in the Argentine spiritual movement Llave Mariana. Yılmaz and Avci (2024) verified that psychological pain, spiritual well-being, and social support are interconnected and can aid women in coping with the fear of childbirth (Behmanesh et al., 2024). Research in Latin America further revealed that low cultural dislocation, spiritual disharmony, and socioeconomic stress contribute to suicide among indigenous youth. Whereas culturally and spiritually sensitive interventions can serve as protective factors.

The existing research mainly focuses on healing practices as supplements to medical treatment for physical illnesses; a few studies also highlight their psychological benefits. In these studies, spiritual longing often emerges in response to life-threatening diseases or traumatic events. This study, therefore, seeks to determine whether the need for spiritual healing necessarily occurs only when the physical body is in distress.

### **Materials and Methods**

For this study, I used the constructivist grounded theory within the qualitative paradigm. Its inductive approach allowed exploration of spiritual healing and practices through participants' lived experiences. This method provided flexibility, reflexivity, and openness to new ideas. Using a sociological perspective and a constructivist grounded theory approach, the study compared data with emerging insights, identified similarities and differences, and accepted conflicting realities as part of the research process (Charmaz, 2014).

The universe of this study was Lahore Dua House, which includes participants from diverse backgrounds worldwide. I used purposive sampling. With the administration as a key informant, I interviewed sixteen participants and selected thirteen, including the Sufi Saint, for the study once saturation was achieved.

The interview served as the primary data collection method for this study. A semi-structured interview guide was developed to start and direct the conversation. Each interview was regarded as a separate instance, contributing responses that helped shape the theory (Charmaz, 2014). The reliability and validity of the responses were ensured by promising participants a transcript before the final draft was submitted (Neuman, 2007, p. 144). Since there was no hypothesis to test, this study focused on analyzing the participants' observations, opinions, and experiences at Dua House. Due to the pandemic, interviews were conducted over the phone for more than two months. These interviews were audio-recorded and ranged in length from thirty minutes to four hours. The interview with the key informant was the longest, lasting nearly four hours.

The analysis followed Charmaz's (2014) grounded theory approach, progressing through initial coding, focused coding, memo writing, and development of theoretical categories. Initial coding remained close to the Data, generating multiple codes from verbatim transcripts. Focused coding then identified the most significant codes for analytical categorization, while memo-writing captured emerging insights and facilitated comparison—theoretical sampling refined categories by emphasizing conceptual depth (pp. 116-163). I used tables to illustrate this progression throughout the analysis. The following quote from one of the participants presents this entire process:

**Table 1**  
*Example of Coding Framework from Data Excerpt to Theoretical Category*

| Data Excerpt  | Initial Coding   | Focused Coding                                | Theoretical Category                         |
|---|--|---|--|
| “The Sufi Saint once advised me that if I wanted to discuss anything with him, I should write it on a piece of paper and place it on the top wall of my house. Several times, I have noticed that whatever I wrote was not only received but also directly addressed by him in the following meeting” (Nusrat, 74). | Writing concerns on paper as instructed.                 | Symbolic Communication with mentor            | Spiritual connectivity beyond physical means |
|   | Experiencing those concerns are received.                | Validation of concerns through acknowledgment |  |
|   | Observing the mentor addressing concerns in the meeting. | Strengthened trust in spiritual intuition     |  |
|   | Feeling acknowledged through indirect communication.     |   |  |

To save space while maintaining detail, participants’ responses were tabulated alongside their coding process, and memo writing was incorporated into the descriptive analysis.

The study involved 13 participants, along with the Sufi Saint, evenly split between men and women. Participants' ages ranged from 24 to 85 years. The largest age groups were those in the 55-64 and 74-85 categories, each comprising 25% of the population. Half of the participants had been visiting for 5-14 years, while the remaining participants reported longer tenures ranging from 15 to 44 years. Participants came from diverse educational backgrounds, with two holding undergraduate degrees (16%). Others had backgrounds in various fields, including engineering (16%), Business Administration (8%), Psychology (8%), Home Economics (8%), Economics (8%), Food Sciences (8%), and mentor coaching (8%). Inclusion criteria required adults aged 18 years and above who regularly attended Dua House for spiritual healing; both the seeker and the Sufi Saint were eligible. Exclusion criteria included minors, first-time visitors, unwilling participants, and individuals with severe medical or psychiatric conditions.

This section introduces my Positionality, emphasizing its role in shaping data collection, interpretation, and the dynamics between the researcher and participants, as well as the need for reflexivity, transparency, and ethical awareness throughout the study (Gurr et al., 2024). In my case, my life circumstances have shaped my spiritual journey. Growing up in a middle-class family with a strained parental relationship, I often felt disconnected and searched for an ideal figure who could embody sincerity and wisdom. This quest reached a turning point with my encounter with Sarfraz A. Shah through his book *Loh-e-Faqeer*, which profoundly changed my perspective and led me to Dua House. Over the

years, my involvement with him and the institute has shaped my understanding of faith, resilience, and compassion, and ultimately inspired this research. By framing my personal journey within a sociological perspective, I recognize how my background, experiences, and spiritual involvement inform both the focus and interaction within this study. To reduce personal bias, strategies like peer debriefing sessions were employed to challenge assumptions and broaden perspectives.

Regarding ethical considerations, I sent an email that included a synopsis, my introduction, and a statement explaining the importance of their contribution. Participants were assured that transcripts based on their experiences would be shared with them before submitting the final draft. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. A few participants requested that specific details be omitted, and these details were accordingly removed. All ethical considerations were addressed.

Although data was collected in 2021, my use of constructivist grounded theory and ongoing visits to Dua House ensured validity. They confirmed the continued relevance of participants' lived experiences and healing practices.

### Findings

To ensure analytical transparency, each theoretical insight is preceded by a table summarizing the coding process, which includes initial coding, focused coding, and concludes with a theoretical insight that synthesizes participants' experiences. This method enables the reader to quickly grasp the coding process while ensuring that subsequent memo writing is smoothly integrated into the descriptive analysis and remains grounded in the participants' narratives.

**Table 2**

#### *Coding Framework from Data Excerpt to Theoretical Insights*

| Data Excerpt  | Initial Coding  | Focused Coding  |
|---|---|---|
| "After my mother, when I was growing up.... I was very disillusioned by the concept of faith and religion. I thought if Allah has all the power and if it was in His control not to take my mother away, why did he make me go through all this?" (Zainab, 32, Lawyer). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of mother in childhood</li> <li>• Disillusionment with belief</li> <li>• Questioning Allah's power</li> <li>• Sense of injustice in personal suffering</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis of faith after personal tragedy</li> <li>• Struggle with belief and spiritual disconnect</li> <li>• Loss shaping religious worldview</li> </ul> |
| "Residing near a Church and witnessing its practices awakened my curiosity about Islam. I went to many scholars to understand Islam, but there was still something missing" (Adil, 42, Finance  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to church practices</li> <li>• Sparked curiosity about learning Islam</li> <li>• Persistent sense of incompleteness</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interfaith exposure to spiritual search</li> <li>• Religious curiosity and exploration</li> </ul>  |



|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Consultant at Multinational).   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing spiritual void</li> </ul>  |
| “I felt dreams were guiding me from shrine to shrine, and my passion would not let me rest until I had visited them all! The process continued until I met the Sufi Saint” (Seemab, 67, Administrator at Dua House, Educationist).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided by dreams</li> <li>• Moving from shrine to shrine</li> <li>• Persistent passion driving the journey</li> <li>• Encounter with the Sufi Saint as closure to the quest</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dreams as spiritual guidance</li> <li>• Shrine visits as a part of the process</li> <li>• Passion and restlessness in a spiritual quest</li> <li>• Culmination in meeting a Saint</li> </ul> |
| “Inspired by stories about Prophets, Saints, and their divine gifts, we wanted to meet a Sufi Saint for real.” (Saba, 42, Gazetted officer; Waqar, 60, Retired from the Armed forces; Aqeel, 63, Director at SPARCO; Shakir, 58, Businessman & Media manager at Dua House). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiration from stories</li> <li>• Divine gifts</li> <li>• Real-life spiritual connection</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longing for authentic spiritual connection beyond stories</li> </ul>   |
| “I was having recurring bladder pain, which often required emergency medical treatment, but it never helped” (Ahmad, 57, Government Consultant).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistent pain</li> <li>• Frequent medical emergencies</li> <li>• Ineffectiveness of treatment</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limitations of medical treatment for a serious health issue</li> </ul>   |
| “Initially hesitant despite my mother's insistence, I visited Dua House out of curiosity” (Asim, 28, Manager at Five-Star Hotel).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hesitancy</li> <li>• Parental influence</li> <li>• Curiosity</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother's insistence developed curiosity</li> </ul>   |
| “I was not actively seeking spiritual help, but was convinced of his spiritual depth and knowledge” (Nusrat, 74, Retired as Associate Professor).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not actively seeking healing</li> <li>• Convinced of his spiritual side and knowledge</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovering the spiritual side of the Sufi Saint</li> </ul>  |
| “Due to the financial crisis, we met the Sufi Saint on our uncle's advice, and the first meeting sparked my interest” (Hiba, 42, UK-based, Housewife).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial struggle</li> <li>• Uncle's advice</li> <li>• First encounter with the Sufi Saint inspired</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic instability</li> <li>• Social Influence</li> <li>• Transformative meeting</li> </ul>  |



|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |
| “Fibromyalgia, emotional emptiness, and a sense of being unsettled in marriage led me to seek answers” (Noor, 42, Administrator in Hospital). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fibromyalgia</li><li>• Emotional emptiness</li><li>• Unsettled marriage</li><li>• Seeking answers</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical ailment</li><li>• Relational conflict</li><li>• Search for healing</li></ul> |

Zainab’s account in Table 2 shows how the loss of a mother in childhood can deeply shake one’s faith. Her words reflect a struggle to understand why suffering happens if God is all-powerful and reveal how grief can lead to doubts rather than finding comfort in faith, which eventually led her to seek spiritual healing. In contrast, Adil’s response shows how proximity to other faith practices can promote self-reflection and a renewed search for meaning within one’s own religion. His active engagement with Islam, yet a continued sense of “missing”, suggests that formal or intellectual learning alone cannot help with spiritual needs. For spiritual awakening, one must nurture oneself spiritually. Seemab’s reflection in Table 2 highlights the role of dreams not merely as personal imagination, but as an active, divine force shaping spiritual trajectories; a journey of preparation that culminates in her arrival at Dua House, which she identifies as the place where her spiritual quest was fulfilled. This experience aligns with the Divine connectedness scale,” which measures a sense of guidance, support, and connection to God, and relates to higher religiosity (Datu & Fincham, 2024). Visiting shrines has been a common practice among the participants. However, their experiences at the shrines reflected different levels of attachment and a shared sense of being guided. The following account describes Shakir’s attachment to a distant shrine, but financial constraints and practical circumstances shifted his pursuit of spiritual healing.

“One day, when I had no money to travel, I prayed at the Shrine to connect me with a Sufi Saint in my own city, and soon after, I was in Dua House. I believe Mian Muhammad Bukhs (R.A) had introduced me to Sarfraz A. Shah.”

This demonstrates how personal limitations are reframed through faith in divine guidance, highlighting the shrine’s significance in the participant’s spiritual journey. Health always remains our top priority, and this study is no exception. Ahmad and Noor’s account in Table 2 reveals that sometimes physical ailments and emotional emptiness have spiritual origins, leading to illnesses that conventional medicine cannot treat and prompting individuals to seek spiritual healing (Subandi et al., 2023). Conversely, Asim and Hibah’s experiences describe how initial hesitation or external influence can evolve into personal spiritual commitment through encounters with the Sufi Saint. Beyond spiritual healing or divine guidance, a participant was drawn to the guide’s blend

of modern outlook and spiritual depth, which fostered trust and a sense of fascination. Waqar summed up as:

“I already had a wonderful life. I was attracted to him because he was educated, intellectual, modern in appearance, but spiritual at heart! I could ask him anything, and he would politely respond without offense.”

Findings in Table 2 suggest that spiritual connection is perceived as divine, and once awakened, it must be nurtured. Dreams, childhood stories of Sufi Saints, disillusionment with medical science or faith, and social influences all shaped participants’ quest for spirituality. Through coding and categorization, we developed the theoretical insight “Pathways to Spiritual Engagement: Negotiating Spiritual Interest through social influence, life crisis, and intellectual inspiration.”, highlighting the circumstances that sparked their interest in healing practices.

The following section presents Participants’ healing experiences with the Sufi Saint at Dua House. The same pattern is implied, moving from a table, based on how codes emerged from raw data to theoretical categories, and evolving into broader themes.

**Table 3**

***Coding Framework from Data Excerpt to Theoretical Insights***

| Data Excerpt  | Open Code   | Focused Code   |
|---|---|--|
| “It took some time, but eventually, I was at peace after recitation. I believe listening to his lecture, recitation of Surah Rehman, and spending time in the aura of Dua House jointly worked” (Zainab). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual process of healing</li> <li>• Attaining peace through Surah Rehman</li> <li>• Influence of lectures</li> <li>• Aura of Dua House</li> <li>• Combined effect</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic healing</li> <li>• Incorporation of spiritual practices</li> <li>• Transformation towards inner peace</li> </ul> |
| I feel healed when I can learn and practice Islam through the lectures of the Sufi Saint (Adil, Aqeel).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling healed</li> <li>• Learning and practicing Islam through lectures</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healing through religious knowledge</li> <li>• Lecture as a source of guidance</li> </ul>                                 |
| “Acts of serving humanity, e.g., feeding people, or volunteering for the <i>Dum</i> , helped us revive the connection with Allah” (Saba, Waqar).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asked to feed hungry people</li> <li>• Revived connection with Allah</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spiritual renewal through charitable acts</li> <li>• Linking Service to others with divine connection</li> </ul>          |
| “After my mother’s passing, I was unconscious for three days despite receiving ammonia several  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother passing</li> <li>• Prolonged unconsciousness</li> <li>• Medical attempt failed</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restoration of consciousness via <i>Dum</i></li> <li>• Spiritual intervention</li> </ul>                                  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| times, and I missed her funeral as well! I only regained normalcy after the Sufi Saint performed <i>Dum</i> (blowing with Quranic recitation) on me” (Seemab).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufi Saint performed <i>Dum</i></li> <li>• Immediate recovery</li> </ul>  |  |
| “Managing the restaurant, home, and children left me exhausted! The more I resisted, the worse it felt, until my mentor taught me to accept the natural design. That acceptance transformed my spirituality” (Hiba). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhaustion from multiple responsibilities</li> <li>• Struggles with resistance</li> <li>• Mentor’s guidance</li> <li>• Acceptance of nature’s design</li> <li>• Transformation of spirituality</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcoming struggles through spiritual acceptance</li> <li>• Mentorship as a catalyst for resilience</li> <li>• Transformation through surrender</li> </ul> |
| “I felt as if an unseen force had transformed our strained relationship into a harmonious one, and we had begun a spiritual journey together” (Noor).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence of unseen force</li> <li>• Transformation of a strained relationship</li> <li>• Emergence of harmony</li> <li>• Shared spiritual journey</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marital reconciliation through divine intervention</li> <li>• Collective spiritual transformation</li> </ul>  |
| “Living in his presence is healing for me, and I have devoted my life to it” (Shakir).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healing through presence</li> <li>• Devotion to Sufi Saint</li> <li>• Lifelong commitment</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healing through spiritual proximity</li> <li>• Devotion as a form of spiritual fulfillment</li> </ul>   |

Zainab’s response in Table 3 illustrates how peace emerges not from a single practice but through the combination of recitation, lectures, therapeutic encounters, and the spiritual environment of Dua House, highlighting the holistic nature of healing experiences. Her response aligns with Henry’s (2013) view of spiritual energy derived from Islamic teachings and rituals. Similarly, Noor’s experience highlights relational healing as a result of divine help, framing improved harmony not just as interpersonal change but as part of a shared spiritual journey. Adil and Aqeel’s reflections emphasize that healing is closely tied to religious learning and practice, underscoring the role of the Sufi saint’s lecture in integrating spiritual education with therapy. Both Waqar and Saba’s accounts in Table 3 demonstrate how acts of service, guided by religious principles, serve as pathways to strengthening the connection with Allah. Seemab’s story illustrates the limitations of biomedical intervention and the perceived effectiveness of spiritual healing, which helped her

overcome grief by fading it from memory through Dum (Rahman, 2104, p. 7). Since Seemab has served Dua House for the longest time and is among the oldest members, she shared various healing experiences. Her following quotation suggests that healing can flow through a spiritual network of relationships between mentor-disciple lineages. Seemab summarized as;

“As a widow, shattered by inheritance loss, threats, and confinement to nothing but prayers! I longed for a helping hand.... When hope seemed lost, my mentor, who had been in the UK for years, appeared at my door, offering his assistance. I cried a lot when he revealed that he was sent by his late mentor, Syed Yaqoob Ali Shah (R.A).”

Here, the arrival of her guide is perceived not as a coincidence but as divinely arranged support, reinforcing faith in the Sufi lineage of guidance. In stark contrast to the above quotation, a woman claimed to have been put on trial to nurture her spirituality. Hiba’s narrative in Table 3 reveals how daily struggles and resistance gave way to spiritual renewal once reframed through a mentor’s guidance, emphasizing acceptance as a transformative pathway to resilience and inner peace. Shakir’s narrative highlights the healing power of proximity, where being in the Sufi Saint’s presence itself becomes a source of comfort and devotion. His role as a volunteer facilitates sustained closeness, showing how service and spiritual attachment merge into the lived experience of healing.

The spiritual journey towards healing reflects how moments of loss, hardship, and inner conflict become turning points when guided by spiritual counsel, rituals, and a driving force to accept the natural order. Whether through reviving the connection with Allah, easing unbearable pain, finding courage in widowhood, or reshaping rigid beliefs, each narrative highlights how a Sufi Saint transforms pain into resilience and devotion into a path of more profound healing. The experiences shared above evolve into a generalized theme, “Modes of healing and recovery,” which vividly covers the mechanisms of healing practices suggested by the Sufi Saint.

Through a sociological lens, the following section shifts from individual healing to the broader social benefits of Dua House.

**Table 4**

***Coding Framework from Data Excerpt to Theoretical Insights***

| Data Excerpt   | Open Codes  | Focused Codes   |
|--|---|---|
| “His books and lectures offer conceptual clarity, whereas therapeutic encounters provide personalized counselling” (Zainab). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept clarity with books and lectures</li> <li>• Therapeutic encounters provide counselling</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual clarity and counselling through mediated sources</li> </ul> |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>“<i>Dum</i>, not only heals patients, but it gives a positive energy to cope with the psychological aspect of the ailment” (Adil).</p> <p>“Cognitive reframing through combined practices has helped almost everyone I have encountered in 40 years” (Seemab).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dum</i> as a healing practice</li> <li>• physical and psychological</li> <li>• Cognitive reframing</li> <li>• Use of combined practices</li> <li>• Long-term experience</li> <li>• Widespread benefit to people</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and Conceptual clarity and counseling through mediated sources of wellness</li> <li>• Longevity and consistency of healing outcomes</li> <li>• Cognitive transformation as central healing</li> </ul> |
| <p>Visiting Dua House improves visitors’ behavior and fosters the courage to accept others as they are! (Aqeel, Nusrat, Noor).</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved behavior</li> <li>• Accepting others as they are</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior and social transformation</li> </ul>  |
| <p>“Well, people get what they seek! Those who chase worldly gains rarely find Allah, while those who seek Allah are often blessed in both this world and the next. I have witnessed both kinds of people among his followers” (Saba).</p>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People received according to their desires</li> <li>• Chasing worldly gains hinders divine connection</li> <li>• Seeking Allah brings blessings in both worlds</li> <li>• Witnessing both kinds of people</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentions determine spiritual outcomes</li> <li>• Divine reciprocity based on the seeker’s orientation</li> </ul>   |
| <p>“People learn to rely on Allah, and that reliance becomes part of their personalities” (Hiba).</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to rely on Allah</li> <li>• Reliance as part of them</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of faith into self/identity</li> </ul>   |
| <p>“The Sufi saint funds Dua House himself, and provides financial assistance to those in need” (Shakir, Ahmad).</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Sufi Saint funds Dua House himself</li> <li>• Provides financial help</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Self-Reliance of a Sufi Saint</li> <li>• Beyond spiritual healing</li> </ul>   |

It was crucial to understand how spiritual healing is performed at Dua House and how it benefits society. Zainab's account in Table 4 underscores the dual role of Sufi Saints’ teachings. While books and lectures offer intellectual clarity at a collective level, therapeutic encounters address personal struggles more directly, reflecting the complementary nature of public instruction and individualized care in the healing process. Adil highlights that *Dum* offers both physical healing

and psychological strength. Seemab's reflection emphasizes that cognitive reframing holds the central position among all healing practices.

The reflections of Aqeel, Nusrat, and Noor suggest that Dua House extends healing beyond individual fostering behavioral change, encouraging acceptance of others, and reinforcing its role in shaping interpersonal harmony. The female administrator observed that visitors adapted the teachings of the Sufi Saint and adjusted their behavior, which both fellow participants and the Dua House administration noticed. She put it this way:

"The change depends on how much water one takes from the flowing river."

Saba and Hiba's account emphasizes intention as central to spiritual experiences, contrasting material pursuit with genuine devotion. Their observation reinforces the notion that seeking Allah leads to holistic blessings, while a worldly focus limits spiritual fulfillment. The participants distinguished between visitors motivated by short-term, problem-focused goals such as health, education, employment, or family issues and those with long-term spiritual aspirations, seeking knowledge and closeness to Allah. Short-term seekers may leave disappointed when immediate results are not achieved, overlooking that a Sufi Saint can guide and pray only. Ahmad explained;

"Some visitors leave upset when their problems are not solved quickly. They forget, the Sufi Saint can only guide and pray, but finality rests with Allah only."

The above account highlights the interplay between visitors' expectations, spiritual guidance, and reliance on divine will.

Overall, participants viewed Dua House as a space that nurtures spirituality and offers personalized guidance, fostering trust through the Sufi Saint's altruistic nature. It empowers women by deputing them on administrative tasks, promotes social inclusion, and supports community development. Based on the description from Table 4, the theme 'The Contribution of Dua House: Societal Implications' has emerged.

### **Discussion**

Previous studies have shown that the search for spiritual healing often arises from experiencing the limitations of medical science or facing serious life challenges, and have suggested integrating healing practices into medical science. (Bagheri et al., 2017; Cruz et al., 2017; Raghavan et al., 2022; Cetinkaya & Billings, 2024) which partially aligns with this research and emphasizes a broader perspective, indicating that the desire to pursue spirituality may stem from a genuine longing for divine connection. To conclude the exploration of the participants' views on spirituality, the Sufi Saint of Dua House clarified that Spirituality concerns the human soul, nurtured through moral and ethical values rooted in Islam. These values guide success in this life and the hereafter. He further emphasized that worship builds discipline, but true spirituality is grounded in serving humanity. Based on his perspective, spiritual healing means nurturing the human soul, and spiritual growth depends

on how well the soul is cared for (Rahman, 2014). At Dua House, spiritual healing is achieved through lectures, supplications/Dua, therapeutic encounters, and serving humanity. These practices create a comprehensive path to healing and recovery.

Like all aspects of life, spirituality evolves. Mystic orders persist, but their language and methods adapt to meet current needs. As a result, finding the right guide for spiritual guidance has become increasingly challenging over the years (Gyimah et al., 2022; Yih, 2024). The Sufi Saint explains that an actual guide leads by example and is recognized through repeated interactions or, at times, an immediate sense of peace and calm in his presence, a view emphasized by Shafaq (2009, p. 61). Participants described the Sufi Saint as a charismatic figure, which the Sufi Saint attributed to his unconditional love and compassion. This love for humanity creates a positive aura around him. Shrines, enriched by constant recitation and *Zikr*, are believed to attract divine mercy and enhance the chance of prayers being answered. However, the fulfilment of supplications should not be attributed to the late Sufi Saint (Deak & Mengga, 2023). Weber viewed charisma as a temporary phenomenon, which ends with a leader's death (Dillon, 2014, p. 142). In contrast, this study understands charisma as a divine gift (*Kashf*) that allows the Sufi Saint to transcend time and space through spiritual intuition (Bilqies, 2014, p. 70; Shah, 2013, p. 253). At Dua House, Weber's concept of routinization is evident, as the Sufi Saint has appointed Dr. Khuram Tariq as his caliph based on spiritual merit. He made a public announcement to ensure continuity of his mission and prevent disputes (Shah, 2015, p. 252). Thus, charisma is not seen as short-lived but as divinely sustained and institutionally preserved.

The Sufi Saint emphasized that Dua House is not an institution but a space for comfort and guidance. Seekers strengthen their characters and seek Allah through love and the Sunnah, affirming that Sufism is rooted in the message of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. (Manzoor et al., 2019; Milani, 2024; Arifka, 2025). Since following the Shari'ah can be challenging, Sufi Saints aim to emulate the Prophet's method of guiding people. Sufism follows a structured hierarchy in which one advances through stages of purification and realization. Spiritual ranks are believed to be affirmed by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W); when a caliph is appointed, the Prophet's seal is placed between his shoulders. Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (R.A) is the custodian of the seal of caliphate (Shah, 2019, p. 255). Most research on Sufism focuses on shrines and stories shared by disciples after a Saint's death, often providing a limited view (Arshaad et al., 2024; Mansoor et al., 2025). This study highlights healing from both the participants' and the Sufi Saint's perspective. It highlights that a visitor may hold unrealistic expectations, but outcomes are determined only by Allah, not by the Sufi Saint. Unmet goals are framed as spiritual submission, aligning with research on irreligious expectations that calls for education, social, and psychological strategies to promote healthier religious engagement. (Wang, Luo, Cao, & Jiang, 2024). Ultimately, my research demonstrates how genuine Sufism fosters



humility, inclusivity, and service to humanity, offering both spiritual and social healing in modern society, and responds to previous calls for research on practical healing experiences (Cetinkaya & Billings, 2024; Rofiqoh et al., 2025, p. 89).

Although data was collected in 2021, the organizational context has since changed. Due to health issues, Syed Sarfraz A. Shah has assigned responsibilities to his sons: Syed Sohail Shah in Lahore/Islamabad, and Syed Shiraz Shah in London, as well as Online. Additionally, his only appointed caliph, Dr. Khuram Tariq, operates in Faisalabad. The Sufi Saint remains available in Islamabad every week, but a strict token system controls access to his residence in Lahore. This careful transition demonstrates his foresight, ensuring that although his personal availability is limited, the spiritual mission he nurtured for forty years continues smoothly through his sons and the caliph.

### **Conclusion**

This paper clarifies the amalgamated concepts and offers a comprehensive view of spirituality rooted in Islam. Spiritual healing is introduced as a method for cleansing the human soul. The findings challenge the narrow notion that spirituality is a path chosen only by the less privileged, the terminally ill, or social outcasts. While suffering may attract some to the spiritual path, a broader view shows that spirituality is the pursuit of knowledge, love, and closeness to Allah. It is the thirst that only deepens once the journey begins. Those with superficial motives may join this path, but they rarely endure, as it requires sincerity of heart and soul. Since the soul is beyond gender, spirituality makes no distinction. The key to excelling in this journey is “total submission to Allah” and unconditional love for humanity. In conclusion, I presented the dynamics of spiritual healing and practices grounded in diverse responses.

### **Recommendations**

Future research should focus on living Sufi Saints, as their broader self-understanding compared to their followers' perceptions offers more profound insights into the relationship between Sufi Saints and healing seekers, as well as the ultimate goal of spirituality.

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