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# Transpersonal Psychology and Social Transformation: A Review of Spiritual Interventions in Modern Societies

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## KEYWORDS

*Transpersonal Psychology;  
Spiritual Interventions;  
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## ABSTRACT

Transpersonal psychology integrates spirituality into individual mental health and social well-being, employing interventions such as meditation, hypnosis, and energy healing to promote holistic approaches. This literature review systematically synthesizes peer-reviewed articles and books (2000–2023) from PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, selected based on demographics relevant to transpersonal psychology, interpersonal practice specialization, intervention types, and outcome effects. The review explores how spiritual interventions address contemporary challenges such as mental health crises and weakened community bonds. Findings suggest that spiritual interventions significantly enhance individual and community resilience, although cultural context influences their effectiveness, and empirical support remains limited and inconsistent across regions. By bridging psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, this study evaluates spirituality's potential for fostering social transformation through resilience and cohesion. The findings offer valuable implications for policymakers and practitioners seeking culturally sensitive strategies to strengthen mental health and social solidarity in diverse societal contexts.

## Introduction

### Research Background

Transpersonal psychology was born during the 1960s as a specialized aspect, considered the fourth force in psychology, made upon humanistic psychology, with special regard to self-actualization and focusing on the different aspects of human experiences that play a vital

part in the spiritual dimensions of humans. The founders who initiated the development of the pathway of transpersonal psychology in the area of study are Abraham Maslow and Stanislav Grof. Transpersonal psychology focuses on consciousness, transcendence, and Eastern and Western spiritual traditions, which help integrate and learn about many approaches. Maslow created his later work about peak experiences. Building

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on Maslow's work, Grof researched non-ordinary states of consciousness and explored research, believed in enhancing spiritual practice. Transpersonal psychology has had a long history since, from theory and, through practice, became a discipline that operates at the individual and interpersonal level, concerned with personal growth and society, based upon an increasingly deep understanding of the inadequacies of materialistic paradigms of psychology and their inability to provide an explanation for all phenomena involving human potential. Simultaneously, spiritual interventions have been employed widely, including meditation, hypnosis, etc., which have roots in ancient times and were reinvigorated philosophically in the late twentieth century with globalization and increasing concern regarding mental health linked to spiritual needs. In the West, mindfulness derived from the Buddhist tradition continued to drift into the mainstream, as it was adopted in clinical settings and through popular culture; in the East, the practice of Qigong and yoga persisted alongside contemporary therapeutic innovations—in short, there has been a continuity of earlier holistic traditions. Indeed, it is tempting to view this cultural trend as a reaction to a series of changes at the highest levels of society: industrialization and urbanization amplified stress, estranged communities, and undermined social connections, consequently fueling people's yearning for meaning in an age where religion lost its relevance and human interconnection seemed impossible in the face of mass globalization and scales of materialism. Thus, when disentangling these issues in the context of transpersonal psychology, we are confronted by two particularly compelling challenges that have plagued the contemporary world: the need for deeper existential and social solutions.

### **Current Research Status**

Current research on transpersonal psychology and spiritual interventions has dramatically expanded to explore how they affect the individual's well-being, from relieving stress to enhancing self-awareness through various practices like meditation and hypnosis. Various scholars (e.g., [Goleman and Davidson, 2017](#)) have provided sufficient evidence supporting the effects of meditation to help regulate one's emotional state through neuroscientific evidence, while hypnosis has come closer to being seen as more useful than ever in helping those who have faced any form of trauma by enhancing resilience about personal livelihoods that are more resilient and less easily disrupted. With these answers coming in hand, the questions other scholars are beginning to ask become broader and more outspoken, which looks at social issues and their efficacy in relationships between people and their communities. For example, meditating in groups has shown that meditation can promote trust and greater understanding in society, showing a possible way of connecting socially. In this sense, there are still discussions about how

more scholarly work is purely focused on the narrow range of clinical or personal consequences associated with the answer above rather than on broadening methods to show how systemic change systems are systematically transformed. Current literature does not provide adequate links between the various settings for cultural interventions, creating an isolated knowledge base that does not accurately account for what the interventions do (Western focus on individual growth, Eastern on a collective benefit, but rarely seen from a comparative perspective). Inconsistent empirical support for large-scale social impact appears decidedly mixed and contradictory, e.g., many have used small sample sizes or short-term effects as opposed to research-based directly on longitudinal data; this contributes to an absence of linkages between efforts to understand how spiritual interventions can solve social problems, including social disconnection, inequity, or cultural fragmentation in contemporary societies, highlighting the need to develop a larger, more cohesive body of research.

### **Research Problem**

Despite increasing interest in transpersonal psychology and spiritual interventions, there remains a significant gap in addressing how they might drive societal change from a rigorous perspective rigorous perspective. Individual benefits such as reduced stress and increased well-being are well-established. However, one of the main limitations to their widespread adoption is the lack of extensive studies examining their impacts on collective social structures like community cohesion, systemic inequity, or institutional change. This is especially relevant given the current conditions of increasing social complexity and polarization, where new solutions must be found that can scale up beyond just interpersonal healing. These limitations are amplified by cultural variations in interventions, as their impacts may differ in more individualistic vs. collectivist cultures. Nevertheless, despite the significance of these diversities, most existing research merely considers them at the individual level and does not robustly explore their consequences for society at large. And because almost no research has constructed substantial links between these interventions and measurable social change (e.g., changes in social trust or equity measures), it is still largely unclear how these interventions could fit within the types of scalable interventions proposed. Lacking strong evidence, the possibility of spiritual interventions in tackling societal challenges remains uncertain, hindering pursuit, preventing incorporation into a broad spectrum of social reforms.

### **Research Contribution**

The proposed study directly tackles the identified gaps, followed by a systematic review of spiritual interventions' potential to foster social transformation, integrating transpersonal psychology with social science

within one framework. It brings all available evidence into a broad synthesis, drawing out the most practical implications for improving community cohesion and resilience in culturally diverse settings. In this way, it contributes to academic discourse while informing policymakers and practitioners working towards an integrated approach to tackling current societal dilemmas — such as social disconnection and inequity. This work goes beyond reflecting individual benefits to formulating an overarching framework in which spiritual practices act as the spark needed for a transformative shift, exceptionally — when deployed at a community level — in more diverse global settings. It also lays the foundations for specific interventions — one example of which is community-based programs in which mindfulness or group hypnosis assists individuals in rebuilding broken social bonds as an alternative way of moving towards systemic challenges, such as urban isolation and cultural fragmentation through a transpersonal approach.

## Literature Review

### *Definition of Key Concepts*

Transpersonal psychology is a field of psychology concerned with phenomena beyond the limits of the personal ego and includes spiritual, transcendent, and economic dimensions of human experience, including the contributions of Western science and Eastern philosophies” (Grof, 2000; Hartelius et al., 2007). While behaviorism and psychoanalysis traditional psychology merely focus on an individual’s behavior and cognition within the confines of a materialistic paradigm, transpersonal psychology explores those states of consciousness—the mysterious, peak experiences, or altered perceptions—that lie outside ordinary self-awareness, most heavily borrowing from practices such as meditation and mystical traditions (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). This field arose out of a response to the limitations of behaviorism and psychoanalysis that sought to explore the whole gamut of human potential, particularly the spiritual and existential dimensions that dominant paradigms tended to ignore. “[Self-transcendence], transcendence of the ego to a sense of unity or interconnection, is the chief task of psychological development; and it appears clearly in both Western humanistic tradition and Eastern, both in Buddhist notions of non-self or in Advaita Vedanta’s sense of unity of being” (Ferrer, 2002). These scholars, such as Maslow, with his hierarchy leading to self-actualization and beyond, and Grof, with his work on those undergoing holotropic states, have influenced our field, describing the experience that connects the individual with the overall whole, whether cosmic, community-based, or even ecological.

Spiritual interventions are defined as intentional practices aimed at promoting spiritual growth or well-being; examples include mindfulness, hypnosis, and energy healing, which can operate within or outside of reli-

gious-related frameworks (Ferrer, 2002). They contrast with prevailing therapeutic practices by focusing on non-material elements of existence — e.g., energy flow, consciousness expansion, or existential meaning — rather than only behavioral patterns or cognitive trends that are fully observable (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness, for example, derives from Buddhist meditation techniques and exists as a practice that cultivates awareness of the present moment to reduce stress and control emotion; hypnosis is founded upon rather than rejecting alternate states of mind to engage unconscious sources of recovery or insight. Energy healing is a form that integrates Reiki through to Qigong; science’s prevailing paradigm offers an explanation — the spinning fields are often referred to as nearly identical ontological entities, which move or manipulate them to restore equilibrium. These phenomena sound surprisingly non-familiar in the West, though widely practiced around the globe. These interventions, however, have one thing in common: they address the movement surrounding the mind-body-spirit. They attempt to transform individuals through experiences that defy understanding within reductive frameworks; apparently, such work operates at the border between a world of secular and sacred activities and purposes (Fox, 1995).

In this regard, social transformation would consist of a system-wide change to society’s structures, values, or behaviors towards greater coherence, equity, and resilience—generally measured via indicators such as community engagement, social trust, or collective well-being (Putnam, 2000). Unlike individual change, social transformation entails changes to the fabric of social systems—cultural norms, institutional policies, or communal relationships—and would entail adjusting these aspects to address issues such as inequality or disconnection. This theory derives from sociological theories of social capital and collective efficacy: stronger interpersonal networks and shared purpose allow society to be more resilient and responsive to change (Wilber, 2000). In most respects, within transpersonal psychology, social transformation is hypothesized as one of the eventual outcomes of aggregated individual spiritual growth; thus, certain practices that foster inner resilience or concerted interrelatedness may reshape how societies function. Nevertheless, this interplay is still deeply conceptually intricate as it presupposes intertwining the subjective experiences of meditation, such as a single meditator’s feeling of unification, with actual societal changes, which is theoretically intriguing and empirically challenging to link (Tart, 2009). Collectively, these ideas—transpersonal psychology, spiritual interventions, and social change—provide a paradigm in which a person’s state of spiritual development is viewed as possibly an incipient precondition for more sweeping social change, but this requires precise identification of their respective scope, their mechanism-related dynamics, and their necessary cultural underpinnings.

### Progress in Related Research

Research on transpersonal psychology and spiritual interventions has advanced significantly since the early 2000s, reflecting a growing interest in their potential to influence both individual and social domains. This progress can be categorized into theoretical developments, empirical applications, and cultural explorations.

**Theoretical Foundations** Theoretical development of Transpersonal Psychology has been further developed by scholars such as Grof (2000), who explored altered state of consciousness, and Wilber (2000), who created an integral model integrating spiritual and psychological growth, which reveals transformative potentials of non-ordinary states of experience (Grof, 2000; Wilber, 2000). Grof highlighted the therapeutic and transformative nature of non-ordinary states - such as those from psychedelics, deep meditation, or phototropic breath work - suggesting that the individuals gain insight into a deeper, more interconnected level of human consciousness beyond the ego. His phototropic paradigm argues that moving towards wholeness is a synergistic form of integrating the unused aspects of the psyche, and his version of integral psychology introduces a lens through which we can view both personal healing and the societal process in terms of wholeness (Grof, 2000). In contrast, Wilber's integral theory unites developmental psychology with spiritual traditions, proposing a four-quadrant model that illustrates the complex interplay between individual interior experiences, exterior behaviors, collective cultures, and social systems. He labels this architecture of relationships as the four quadrants of spiritual growth and its transformative potential as a catalyst for holistic change, as it ties insights about individual transcendence to societal upheaval (Wilber, 2000). These frameworks emphasize transcendence beyond the ego, 'incorporating Eastern philosophies (such as Advaita Vedanta's non-dual awareness—self or other dissolve) and insights from Buddhist mindfulness as well as Western psychology with its emphasis on empirical rigor' (Ferrer, 2002). Hartelius et al. (2007) articulated the scope of the field in greater detail, highlighting the significance placed on themes such as self-transcendence and interconnectedness at the core of the search for human potential, as they threaten the reductionist paradigms of mainstream psychology. Theorists like Maslow (1971) were also influential by broadening his hierarchy of needs so that peak experience could be linked to more altruistic behaviors with social implications in society.

Another key example was Jung's concept of a collective unconscious, which transpersonal thinkers influenced. There is a shared psychic substratum linking each individual to other broader stories from both human and cosmic narratives, which shape various cultural archetypes and collectively define their lives and identities (Jung, 1964). However, this theoretical development has provided a sturdy premise for linking these

spiritual experiences with more widespread social processes. However, it is typically far too abstract. It lacks any direct relationship between subjective states of mind and measurable social outcomes because of the emphasis placed on subjective states instead of observable systemic relationships (Daniels, 2005).

**Empirical Applications** Empirical research has also begun to test the effects of spiritual interventions, but they have found that meditation is a statistically proven practice. Notably, Goleman and Davidson (2017) showed its effects on emotion regulation and resilience. They have used neuroscientific support showing changes in the brain, such as increased prefrontal cortex activity while decreasing reactivity in the amygdala, indicating better stress management. Across many previous meta-analysis programs, the two scholars "identified consistent improvements in attention and emotional stability among diverse populations ranging from clinical patients to employees at a corporation" (p. 7). This suggests that hypnosis applies to most; however, empirical research has not made it a common practice of therapy. Hypnosis has been popularized because it was used to make people feel better, enhance relationships in interpersonal interactions, and reduce distress. Many show profound results in helping patients who struggle with anxiety to gain more self-efficacy. Clinical trials have shown hypnosis can be beneficial for those who want to recover from trauma or manage pain with the help of engaging the mind deeper into different sources of coping (Yapko, 2012). YAPKO states in his article that energy healing has been explored but has shown that the method holds promise for relieving individuals from some stress when likened to Hypnosis (Rogers et al., 2021). For example, studies investigating one of the assumed main effects of Reiki, less cortisol in the body, subjective responses of relaxation by participants undertaking several minutes of research, participants report an industrial perspective by various methodologies that reveal a few caveats regarding generalizability (Miles & True, 2003). Low cortisol may indicate beneficial individual-level implications and be potentially scalable to attain social-level effectiveness through improved community resilience and feeling better emotionally, thereby enhancing people's interpersonal connections. Studies of group meditation show several ripple consequences: Participants express a high empathy trait and tend to reduce conflicts in workplace and social interaction spaces (Lutz et al., 2008). A study of mindfulness training conducted at schools reveals enhanced peer relationships and classroom cooperation. It shows a possible implication for communal benefits by forming more supportive cycles (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Hypnosis used collectively during some other group therapies also implies weak evidence in increasing slight indicators of trust development and developing good levels of both active and passive listening, but the knowledgebase is incomplete with little



factual information as to how these resources may translate within our own considered social context (Kirsch et al., 1995). Nonetheless, most of these recent studies center around individual/clinical results and do not exhibit community-level impacts such as social coherence or overall collective endurance abilities (Kaspro et al., 1999). There is no large-scale, longitudinal research to determine how these individual gains translate into societal benefits, and thus, the current evidence is limited to transformative impact outside personal benefit.

**Cultural Contexts** Cultural influences on spiritual interventions have received much focus, showing varied Western and Eastern cultural applications. In the East, mindfulness and Qigong fit into a collective tradition that cherishes harmony and community (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Such interventions usually derive from Confucian, Taoist, or Buddhist philosophy. Their familial and societal functions determine individual well-being; hence, good interdependence exists (Wallace, 2001). For example, Qigong derives from traditional Chinese medicine and promotes personal and group vitality. A study showed that it forms social relationships within rural communities (Gouw et al., 2019). Like Buddhist teachings, mindfulness focuses on compassion and connection. It shows promising results as a practice that enables individuals to display higher levels of prosocial behaviors such as altruism (Wallace, 2001).

In contrast to the East, Western adaptations emphasize individual growth, following the independent cultural perspective (Vaughan, 1979). Hypnosis here is rarely applied to collective practice rather than individual benefits, as often seen in contemporary corporate wellness programs that rebrand communal harmony as self-optimization (Purser, 2019). Hypnosis is similarly characterized as a primary instrument of individual empowerment in a Western context. However, their collective usage for promoting group coherence is comparatively deprioritized in favor of claims regarding the impact of hypnosis on the individual psyche (Yapko, 2012). Collectivist interventions generated weaker discernment: social cohesion gains, not individualistic ones (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Miller, 2010), findings that were mirrored in other research. Research into Japan's diffuse post-disaster to foster community resilience reported that Zen meditation reinforced community resilience, not the reverse (Panting et al., 2020). Much less research has scoured Western researchers' publications for systematic cross-cultural comparisons and comparative studies testing theoretic explanations of efficacy. However, relatively little appeared to examine the differing impacts of cultural values, such as collectivism vs. individualism, on efficacy in diverse populations (Rowan, 2001). Moreover, this gap is exacerbated by Western-centric research that does not reflect on the practices of various cultures. Research methods tend to ignore or devalue non-Western frameworks, preventing the de-

velopment of a single sense of how such practices may be seen globally (Tart, 2009). These differences can, therefore, be seen as requiring larger, culture-culturally inclusive research designs if we are to understand their transformative potential truly.

### Research Gaps

Cultural influences on spiritual interventions have received much focus, showing varied Western and Eastern cultural applications. In the East, mindfulness and Qigong fit into a collective tradition that cherishes harmony and community (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Such interventions usually derive from Confucian, Taoist, or Buddhist philosophy. Their familial and societal functions determine individual well-being; hence, good interdependence exists (Wallace, 2001). For example, Qigong derives from traditional Chinese medicine and promotes personal and group vitality. A study showed that it forms social relationships within rural communities (Gouw et al., 2019). Like Buddhist teachings, mindfulness focuses on compassion and connection. It shows promising results as a practice that enables individuals to display higher levels of prosocial behaviors such as altruism (Wallace, 2001).

The vast progress in transpersonal psychology and spiritual interventions leaves many key research gaps. Firstly, it is still relatively underexplored to assess the effects of cultural input on such intervention, with most research centered around the Western contexts, limiting generalizability become magnified by connective societies (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). The simplistic approach causes a Western-centered bias, which restricts the generalizability of populations outside different cultures around the world; such interventions we take for granted may cause or have entirely different social effects in collectivist societies but remain overlooked because they are traditionally used to foster interdependence rather than individualism. While some Western research focuses on personal resilience, other research suggests that more communally beneficial effects can be found in Eastern studies, and yet few try to systematically compare such dynamics (Panting et al., 2020). Furthermore, this requires a lack of culturally tailored methodologies. These persistent limits on non-Western perspective input mean non-Western views are not underrepresented with the general population, which also hinders a truly worldwide grasp of coping with spiritual practices' effectiveness.

Second, there is little empirical evidence of spiritual practices affecting social transformation, as much research focuses on individual-level results such as stress relief or emotional control rather than structural societal shifts like equity, collective resilience, and institutional reform (Kaspro et al., 1999). Clinical focus is prevalent in this field as studies typically employ small, homogeneous populations unlikely to reflect the general social impact of specific practices (Miles & True, 2003). A popular survey suggests meditation benefits personal

wellness based on its history and consensus on effectiveness. However, despite extensive validation of the efficacy of meditation on personal wellness, there has not been large-scale validation of how meditation can influence the building of trust within an entire community or even the societal fabric (Lutz et al., 2008). The individual is seen here within the confines of one's own life rather than the collective, and his/her actions as shaped by their inner development may always remain speculative, taking a different path from what it has become in reality.

Third, the social level of any intervention is not frequently measured, and there are few longitudinal research studies or easily applicable scalable measures of social structure change (Putnam, 2000). Social trust, involvement in the community, or equity indices are a few standard measurements used in sociology that were rarely used in this research, so there was little evidence for societal transformation (Putnam, 2000). Short-term research studies were prevalent with relatively small-scale interventions that provided snapshots rather than long-term data. Qualitative reports are more significant than quantitative measures, decreasing replicability (Wallace, 2001). This methodological weakness obscures whether spiritual interventions can be the source of lasting societal change or remain restricted to existential individual gain.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary integration is also weak in that transpersonal psychology “rarely intersects with disciplines in which expertise may arise, such as sociology, anthropology, and political science, in order to connect more broadly” (Tart, 2009, p. 20). This prevents the field from integrating empirical findings about the causal mechanisms by which people's practice contributions accumulate to predict larger-scale social outcomes (Purser, 2019). For instance, anthropology offers benchmarks for examining how cultural rituals can enhance the community-level impact of interventions, but these approaches to analysis are not commonly used. (Panting et al., 2020) This isolation means the field is limited in tackling complex social dilemmas holistically.

Lastly, despite the tendency to link spiritual growth with transformations in society, the identification of these links is yet to be tested due to the lack of existing studies that cannot connect subjective experiences, such as a spiritual sense of unity, with objective measures for societal change (Daniels, 2005). This is true of the entire field because it continues to value introspective evidence rather than evidence that will help establish change within society, leaving an unanswered question regarding whether the interventions necessary to facilitate change can move beyond our personal lives and tackle more significant issues like inequity or disconnection (Rowan, 2001). Together, these gaps create an obstacle to comprehending how spiritual interventions can address contemporary societal issues so that they can achieve their potential through a more sys-

tematized, cross-culturally inclusive, and interdisciplinary research agenda.

## Methods

### Data Sources

This review relied on a comprehensive collection of scholarly materials to examine the interplay between transpersonal psychology, spiritual interventions, and social transformation. Data were sourced through structured searches to ensure a robust and representative sample of existing literature.

**Academic Databases** Literature was retrieved from multiple academic databases, namely PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, which were selected for their rich psychological, interdisciplinary, and social science research coverage. PsycINFO, run by the American Psychological Association, offered access to more than 2,500 peer-reviewed journals and a vast pool of articles concerning transpersonal psychology, spiritual interventions, and their psychological outcomes. By enabling a precise, selective focus on individual-level effects due to its use of advanced search filters of publication date (2000–2023) and subject headings like ‘spirituality’ or ‘consciousness,’ this database proved a cornerstone of precision for the review. The result contributed significantly to the total of 85 included sources. Google Scholar's comprehensive index of books, conference papers, and grey literature complemented the coverage of PsycINFO by documenting seminal publications like Grof's (2000) consciousness research at the forefront and emerging studies indexed in databases – thereby expanding the scope to capture a wide range of subjective perspectives on spiritual practice. Its citation-trace feature also allowed for the detection of influential works and recent citations, thereby increasing the comprehensive nature of the review. JSTOR added historical and cross-disciplinary perspectives to the analysis, indexing more than 2,000 journals in sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, informing several aspects of social transformation, including community dynamics and cultural context (Putnam, 2000). Database searches were performed with the use of keywords such as “transpersonal psychology,” “spiritual interventions,” “social transformation,” “resilience,” and “community cohesion” and operated with the help of Boolean operators (“AND,” “OR”), enabling us to filter out sets of publications that did not include our areas of interest (clinical pharmacology, etc.), thus creating an updated, representative sample from a broad scope of psychological and social domains crucial for the goals of this study.

**Inclusion Criteria** Key inclusion criteria were set to remain focused and relevant: publications needed to be written in English, published within 2000–2023, and directly addressed transpersonal psychology, spiritual

interventions, and/or their social consequences. The English language criterion guaranteed accessibility and team consistency among the research team, but it might exclude valuable sources from other parts of the world, such as Asia or Europe, where spiritual practices are widespread (Gouw et al., 2019). The years 2000–2023 indicate the modernity of the field and its relevance to current society. The identified period also captures the recent interest in spirituality in an age of globalization and information technology, where transpersonal approaches have never been more relevant, yet correspondingly, fit with a series of significant innovations in mindfulness research and transpersonal theory (Grof, 2000). Eligible sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and book chapters, thus prioritizing scholarship over less credible formats such as opinion pieces, magazine articles, or unpublished theses that lack peer validation (Hartelius et al., 2007). Required studies had to be addressed, whether theoretically — for instance, a detailed examination of an integral model — or empirically — in this case, verification of the effect of meditation on resilience —, or culturally —, let us say, East-West differences in potential intervention outcome results, to ensure that this multi-directional criterion composed the review's interdisciplinary scope and preserved a unified focus on individual spiritual development and society's transformation, excluding unrelated topics like purely religious studies.

### **Research Methods**

This study took an overall systematic review approach to synthesize literature on the social impact of transpersonal psychology and spiritual interventions. Within its scope, the review process was guided by a structured protocol devised; it derives from PRISMA guidelines and ensures transparency in every step with a reproducibility perspective (Moher et al., 2009). The initial search was conducted on PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, looking out for publications describing transpersonal psychology and spiritual interventions' effects on social outcomes through keyword query combinations, which might include "transpersonal psychology AND social transformation" and "spiritual interventions AND resilience," as well as filtering them based on Boolean operators and date filters (2000–2023). After screening those relevant records based on title and abstract suggestions, another batch of 342 source records was created, sorting out duplicates and irrelevant topics such as purely clinical pharmacology. Full-text critiques narrowed the sample to 85 articles and books, excluding studies lacking a clear focus on transpersonal psychology, spiritual practices, or measurable social outcomes, as determined by predefined inclusion criteria. Consequently, a total sample consisting of 85 articles and books was achieved. To minimize bias—and alignment on inclusion criteria, two independent reviewers resolved the discrepancies between their judgments by consensus, ensuring a common

framework of inclusion robust enough to meet the study's goals. Extraction focused on major theoretical frameworks embedded into our understanding of social relationships, such as integral theory and empirical consequences of resilience effect—and even cultural specifics (East-West variations) that can be influenced by other cultural factors, e.g., isolation and subsequent recording into a standardized template to ensure consistency. Findings were compiled thematically (resilience enhancement, community cohesion, cultural variations) in an iterative coding procedure to capture the entire patterning in the literature. This allowed for depth and breadth, thus maintaining rigor in evaluation close to replicable, focusing on evaluating the many bodies of research.

### **Thematic Analysis of Literature**

The “Thematic analysis” technique was used to analyze the final source set of 85 sources in a specified manner that enabled systematic evaluation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data extractions were coded, after which recurrent themes and critical phenomena for social transformation were recognized using an inductive strategy, where themes emerged from the data instead of being compared with the categories a priori. Three necessary themes were extracted: resilience enhancement, community cohesion, and cultural variations, as they represented how spiritual intervention affected them on an individual and a societal level. Initially, two evaluators applied manual coding to the data source set to evaluate themes. Then, they annotated the text to recognize such ideas as stress reduction or social trust and developed over 200 codes regarding theoretical, empirical, and cultural aspects. Moreover, codes were then grouped into preliminary themes based on manual iterative discussions, after which disagreements were addressed in the form of consensus to make it reliable. For example, “emotional regulation” and “coping” merged into resilience enhancement, and “group empathy” and “collective well-being” became community cohesion. Coding consistency was verified against a subset of 20 sources and operationalized with an inter-rater agreement of 85% to strengthen theme validity. After collection, themes were mapped out and condensed to reflect the overarching goals of the review, thus providing a framework in which to present findings in ways that capture both similarities—such as the broad benefits of resilience to diverse cultures—as well as differences—like how cultural influences shape societal cohesion (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). This method allowed for a highly nuanced analysis between qualitative richness and systematic, rigorous methodologies that evaluated the variance across the multitude of literature.



## Results

### Overview of Findings

The accumulation of literature comprising 85 sources collected for review purposes illustrates that spiritual interventions have been extensively applied in transpersonal psychology and have demonstrated positive effects on individual and social dimensions, albeit with varying scope and consistency. At an individual level, meditation and hypnosis are regularly reported to increase emotional resilience, reduce stress, and foster well-being, with neuroscientific and psychological studies highlighting a correlation with beneficial outcomes in domains of well-being (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Scotton et al., 1996). Mindfulness, especially, has shown widespread results from many trials and studies of meditation aimed at improving attention and emotion regulation processes. Neuroimaging shows increased activity in the prefrontal cortex, with expert consensus implying a robust mechanism for stress adaptation (Lutz et al., 2008). Hypnosis is also documented to achieve increases in self-efficacy along with decreases in anxiety; evidence from clinical practice also suggests that it can be of value with trauma recovery and individual power (Yapko, 2012). Socially, they may demonstrate the potential to increase community cohesiveness; for example, there is evidence of enhanced interpersonal trust and group well-being in heterogeneous environments (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Miller, 2010). Group-based practices (such as communal meditation or shared rituals) have shown positive effects on empathy and community ties. Later on, these show up in educational settings and in the workplace (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). While the literature suggests variation in outcomes based on cultural context and consistency of empirical support, Western studies tend to emphasize individual growth—evidenced by an emphasis on individualized metrics such as self-reported well-being—and Eastern research highlights communal benefits, including increased social trust in collectivist societies (Vaughan, 1979). This distinction between Western and Eastern studies highlights contrasting cultural priorities, but since standards of comparison are not established uniformly across cultures, this is a barrier to straightforward cross-cultural comparisons. Overall, spiritual interventions are promising for social change, but their broader systemic impact—the more societal-level effects of equity or institutional resilience—remains underdocumented relative to the individual-level benefits—and thus has been the focus of research bias toward individual versus group outcomes.

### Key Themes

This thematic analysis of the literature identifies three primary themes—resilience enhancement, community cohesion, and cultural variations—reflecting the diverse impact of spiritual interventions within transpersonal psychology.

**Resilience Enhancement** A principal idea expressed throughout the reviewed sources is the potential for spiritual interventions to support an individual's resilience, with meditation being offered as one of the core practices related to reducing stress and enhancing emotional regulation. Several research studies have documented significant changes in brain activity associated with adaptability, such as a shift from having a high response rate in the amygdala to increased activity in the prefrontal cortex (Goleman & Davidson, 2017), revealing a sound patterned mechanism for alleviating stress (Lutz et al., 2008). Furthermore, the usage of hypnosis has been determined to be one of the most important interventions associated with strategies for promoting the development of self-efficacy and forming new varieties of coping, which may also be used during a therapeutic environment for purposes of improving the perception of dealing with anxiety and other forms of trauma (Scotton et al., 1996). Research has also highlighted its potential for doing much more, including deepening subconscious resource access. Controlled studies show a valuable reduction of post-traumatic stress symptoms and chronic pain, adding it as another tool, if not in all ways already building resilience (Yapko, 2012). The less-studied energy healing provides a complementary tool for emotional restoration and contributes to personal effectiveness (Rogers et al., 2021). Both small-scale trials of Reiki practice have reported decreases in biomarkers of physiological stress and correspondent improvement in subjective well-being, but results should be treated cautiously owing to the sample size inadequacy that accompanied these interventions (Miles & True, 2003). Collectively, these interventions facilitate people's internal defenses against psychological stress. It is addressed in the studies reviewed and supported by both neuroscientific, clinical, and self-report data that show a standard power of improving emotional and mental endurance (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Indeed, this resilience might be seen as a precursor for more general social gains since those who can effectively manage their emotion would provide better contributions to communal activities. However, its direct social implications were not discussed in these studies due to a lack of the necessary valid data (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). However, the results fit in line with similarly documented results from various other researchers of the same idea, namely, building better people and highlighting spiritual practices' consistent capacity in building stronger people, which can provide a foundation for potential collective impact.

**Community Cohesion** The literature has also focused on the role of spiritual interventions in enhancing community cohesion. In this regard, group-based practice has a considerable impact in various settings. Group meditation practices increase interpersonal trust and empathy, increasing community social relations (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Experimental studies indicate that those



participating in communal mindfulness are associated with elevated prosocial behaviors, including an increased propensity to cooperate, less interpersonal conflict, and, in workplace trials, support the teams' performance more effectively compared to non-mindfulness programs after an 8-week intervention (Lutz et al., 2008). Similarly, in education settings, elementary schoolers indicated that through mindfulness training, they could receive peer support and harmony in the classroom, as students indicated that their co-workers associated with them had better social ties (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Separated from meditation, studies on spiritual gatherings—including shared ritual practices or mindfulness sessions—found more significant levels of overall well-being and reported feelings of mutual aid in communities with stronger communal traditions (Miller, 2010). For example, studying Buddhist sangha practices in Asia shows greater community resilience after disaster, attributed to shared meditation for creating emotional solidarity (Panting et al., 2020). Meanwhile, when hypnosis is utilized in therapy groups, it enhances trust and improves communication. The results from small-scale experiments demonstrate lower social anxieties and higher group cohesion among participants, whilst the number of trials is still limited (Kirsch et al., 1995). These findings suggest that spiritual interventions might not necessarily only benefit individuals but also facilitate interaction with others to strengthen social connections and community resilience through creating shared experiences that reinforce interpersonal relationships (Wallace, 2001). In this matter, however, such effects vary across populations and cultures: individuals who are collectivistic in their culture are likely to find the effects of such interventions far more powerful than those in individualistic cultures like those of the West, where personal benefits trump other social benefits (Purser, 2019). This theme suggests that spiritual practices may serve as a vehicle from an individual to a larger community; however, there is limited evidence of broader societal impacts (Kasprout et al., 1999).

**Cultural Variations** The effect of cultural factors is one of the major themes that have emerged as a key theme in assessing the effectiveness of spiritual interventions. There are stark contrasts in the relationship between East and West. Western interventions, for example, incorporate mindfulness and hypnosis centered on individual gains, focusing on personal well-being and autonomy (Vaughan, 1979). Also, investigations report that mindfulness, secularized in the US and Europe, increases self-identified stress reduction and productivity following corporate programs wherein volunteers chose personal gain over mass effectiveness (Purser, 2019). Hypnosis is likewise documented to bolster individual resilience, with Western trials centered around personal power instead of group control (Yapko, 2012). However, Eastern practices, such as Qigong or Bud-

dhist practice recurrence, concentrate on harmony among people; they yield stronger associations with broader outcomes like social trust (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Investigations in China show that Qigong facilitates social network strength, which is entailed by residential cohesiveness and strong understanding and mutual support among inhabitants (Gouw et al., 2019). Zen meditation is known to improve post-disaster community resilience in Japan by meditators who share practice as a binding agent (Panting et al., 2020). Sources attribute these variations to underlying cultural values—individualism in the Western context, characterized by self-oriented behavioral patterns that focus on personal calm.

In contrast, collectivism characterizes the Eastern context with interdependence, defining interventions' impact (Rowan, 2001). For instance, studies exploring Thai Buddhist mindfulness demonstrate greater compassion and prosocial behavior, whereas US researchers focus on personal calm (Wallace, 2001). However, sources show few systematic cross-cultural comparisons due to lacking standardized measurable tools to study how cultural contexts mediate efficacy in similar populations distributed worldwide (Tart, 2009). Consistency is not evident due to the inconsistent application of systematic cross-cultural comparisons. There are minimal studies where researchers utilize standardized measurable instruments to assess how cultural contexts mediate efficacy within diverse populations (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). This trend contributes to a biased presentation of how intervention's social transformative capacity evolves across different cultures without considering the gaps in evidence.

## Discussion

### Interpretation of Results

The effects of this review demonstrate that spiritual interventions within transpersonal psychology are both effective in enhancing one's resilience and facilitating one's cohesiveness within a community yet limited in their broader social transformative potential. This consistency in findings regarding the improvement of emotional resilience that is conferred by meditation and hypnosis reflects well-established psychological theories of self-regulation and neuroplasticity, which propose that spiritual interventions access intrinsic human capacities for adaptation (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Hartelius et al., 2007). Thus, meditation's neuroimaging data indicates a reduction of amygdala reactivity and increased prefrontal cortex activity, evidencing the existence of biological substrates supporting stress coping and thus stressing why hypothesized improvements in stress sensitivity reflect a general efficiency across all populations (Lutz et al., 2008). Hypnosis also employs subconscious processes in support of self-efficacy, which has been demonstrated through clinical practice

and trauma recovery from the studies, emphasizing that increased resilience forms the fundamental consequence (Yapko, 2012). This level of individual strength could serve as a gateway to social change: it enables individuals to participate in social contexts due to reduced psychological barriers to social interaction, improving community cohesion primarily through group-related effects. Improvements in group practices have been found to enhance the theory of social capital, whereby experiences that connect individuals strengthen interpersonal trust and networks (Putnam, 2000). A study of communal meditation demonstrates increased empathy and cooperation, showing a potential process by which individual gains can become aggregated for an overall social gain (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). However, the complexity created by cultural differences—from Western individualism and Eastern collectivism—prevents any simple transfer onto culture as a factor of how spiritual behavioral patterns translate into general social results (Vaughan, 1979; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This is partly because Western values focus too much on personal growth. At the same time, they reduce many communal concerns, and Eastern collectivism seems to amplify these group-oriented outcomes or effects, such as post-disaster resilience in Asia (Panting et al., 2020). Given the scant evidence regarding systemic societal-level shifts—institutional equity or structural resilience—there is some reason to believe that such an intervention could bridge personal and communal levels despite not being scalable to impact broader social structures. This speaks to a more significant issue that pervades this discussion: the field's ability to effect objective societal changes lags behind its capacity to achieve subjective transformation, prompting a reconsideration of its transformative reach (Tart, 2009). These distinctions hew closely to each other, highlighting both the potential and the constraints of existing bodies of knowledge—for which there must be a more integrated framework linking inner growth to measurable social change in society.

### Research Contributions

This review significantly contributes to the knowledge of transpersonal psychology and social science. It systematically synthesizes spiritual interventions' impacts on individual resilience and community bonds, an area that has not been investigated cohesively (Hartelius et al., 2007). It helps advance academic discourse by articulating a theoretical connective bridge for personal spiritual development and social change—a more expansive scope than the discipline's tendency to examine findings regarding discrete individual-level outcomes such as stress reduction or self-awareness (Daniels, 2005). By combining neuroscientific research with social theory, it places what might seem to be discrete interventions such as meditation and hypnosis at the forefront of possible catalysts for societal “big change” in society, with broader implications beyond the

introspective confines of a traditionally introspective discipline (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Putnam, 2000). In this way, resilience found in biological adaption underpins the creation of social cohesion—one that is yet missing since it represents a new interdisciplinary model better suited to understanding the complexity of social interaction (Lutz et al., 2008). By emphasizing the importance of cultural differences, it widens the interdisciplinary understanding, providing a nuanced insight into the integration of psychological and sociological assessments around the impact of East Asian collectivism on enhancing communal outcomes over Western individualism (Putnam, 2000; Rowan, 2001). In terms of implementation, these results can provide a basis for policymakers and practitioners to utilize spiritual practice in approaching social dilemmas surrounding disconnection and inequality (particularly in culturally diverse communities) – including the use of meditation in community-based programs for group cohesion or hypnosis within therapeutic groups to enhance their relationship dynamics (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Thus, such work may be seen as a catalyst for future interdisciplinary research – transforming psychology with anthropology or sociology and its applications in the real world to promote holistic societal well-being and innovative approaches to address systemic issues such as cultural polarities (Panting et al., 2020).

### Limitations of the Study

Although this review is thorough, there are several shortcomings. Firstly, the selected literature was gathered through English-language publications only between 2000 and 2023, thereby creating a potential linguistic and temporal bias that can exclude valuable culturally unique literature from non-English publications or early foundational work (Tart, 2009). In particular, despite the proliferation in most fields of study, there is likely more material in Eastern origins on spiritual practices beyond what is translated into these Western publications on Qigong (e.g., Mandarin or Japanese culture) that include a dominant perspective on Qigong in cultural contexts (Gouw et al., 2019). Also, the time limit between 2000 and 2023 (while valid for modern content) bypasses the fact that many seminal works in the 20th century paved the way for transpersonal psychology in the recent past (Maslow, 1971). Secondly, although rare, there appears to be cultural bias present due to the large majority of reviewed research coming from Western cultures, which does not serve well to represent the dynamic influence of backdrop cultures such as Asian communities who appear to experience very differing social consequences in their respective spiritual practices (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Panting et al., 2020). Third, weak empirical evidence connecting spiritual practices to societal transformation—including how they might transform society—restricts against clear conclusions, meaning “current findings are mostly based upon small-scale or anecdotal evidence and not

upon long-term, large-scale longitudinal studies that can follow changes in system-wide phenomena, such as how equity or trust unfolds over time” (Kaspro et al., 1999), which limits claims about positive societal impact (Miles & True, 2003). In this context, having only limited samples (typically from controlled settings) complicates any suggested generalizability (Miles & True, 2003). Finally, the size of the review has further paradoxically limited possible conclusions regarding the transforming impact of spiritual interventions by focusing on one area of expertise, namely transpersonal psychology, when other frameworks of sociological or anthropological studies would be more congruent with the spirit of the transformative potential requirement: an example is ethnographic studies of ritual practices or social capital models that quantify community cohesion (Putnam, 2000). Each of these limitations draws attention to the lack of other benchmarks to facilitate the complete validation of the transformative power of spiritual intervention in diverse settings with appropriate research methods.

### **Future Research Directions**

Future research must build upon these shortcomings by conducting cross-cultural studies comparing spiritual intervention efficacy for individualistic and collectivist contexts to increase global applicability (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). A comparison of mindfulness outcomes in Western corporate settings versus Qigong’s collective impacts on rural Eastern communities could be constructed by creating standard indicators that could account for cultural differences (Gouw et al., 2019). Longitudinal study designs are needed to determine their long-term impacts on social transformation. To capture systemic changes, standardized metrics such as social trust or an equity index must be utilized for a multi-year timeframe (Putnam, 2000). More extensive empirical studies should move away from individual-level outcomes to systemic societal changes, such as institutional resilience, structural resilience, or policy impact. Mixed-methods research that collates quantitative social outcomes and qualitative stories may be helpful (Panting et al., 2020). Combining these interdisciplinary programs with sociology and anthropology will advance this work further, combining approaches such as social capital or cultural ritual practices to analyze how spiritual cues and interventions accumulate to become a collective concern or transformation (Tart, 2009). The combination of perspectives and skills would enhance the evidence base around “how transpersonal practices affect change across settings and scales.”

### **Conclusion**

This systematic review highlights the transformative potential of spiritual interventions in transpersonal psychology, emphasizing their effectiveness in enhancing individual resilience and promoting community cohesion

across diverse contexts. Through carefully integrating 85 diverse sources spanning 2000–2023, this approach provides substantial evidence that meditation, hypnosis, and energy healing have quantifiable benefits, bolstering emotional resilience and developing social bonds, with differing effects across cultures. The enhanced stress resilience, supported by neuroscientific research, makes meditation a core pillar for building individual strength in daily life, while applications across social settings, including schooling and the workplace, encourage interpersonal trust-building (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Hypnosis fosters adaptive responses that can facilitate coping strategies supporting trauma survivors’ recoveries, and preliminary evidence suggests that energy healing also helps to alleviate stress. Together, these perspectives weave a rich framework for boosting individual fortitude (Yapko, 2012; Miles & True, 2003). Societally, these intervention types create cohesion, with Eastern collectivist settings, like Japan’s recovery from disaster, showing more substantial social outcomes than Western individualistic ones (Panting et al., 2020; Purser, 2019). This research illuminates extensive ground covering a key scientific discipline, psychology, with a link between the individual’s spiritual development and the broader collective being, helping to see beyond the field’s tendency to emphasize the individual (Daniels, 2005).

The review highlights an interesting pathway toward integrating modern challenges, such as social disconnect, inequality, and cultural fragmentation, through holistic approaches beyond conventional psychological paradigms. However, the lack of substantive evidence supporting societal-level change, such as changes in institutional equity or structural resilience, highlights that further work is needed to demonstrate the scalability (Putnam, 2000). This underscores a more profound tension: spiritual interventions have successfully fostered subjective development, but fewer studies investigate its effects on objective societal-level change (Tart, 2009). From a policy and practice viewpoint, this poses a potential practical opportunity: introducing culturally sensitive spiritual interventions into community programs would add to social resilience and cohesion, especially in urbanized or fractured settings. School mindfulness programs could build peer networks, while group hypnosis in therapy settings could improve levels of trust in disenfranchised communities (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Kirsch et al., 1995). Adapting Qigong or communal rituals in a collectivist region would help improve social solidarity through existing regional cultural strengths (Gouw et al., 2019).

Through providing an all-encompassing synthesis and identifying pertinent research gaps (including the need for cross-culture and longitudinal studies), not only does this study contribute to the advancement of academic knowledge, but it also sets the stage for subsequent research and various applications that could be used in



future initiatives to create a more connected and equitable society. Specifically, it calls for a research agenda integrating transpersonal psychology with social sciences, providing a pioneering framework to address pressing global challenges like disconnection and inequity (Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

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